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A DEVOTIONAL COMMENTARY  
Edited by the Rev. C. H. IRWIN, D.D., and  
the Ven. Archdeacon A. R. BUCKLAND, M.A.

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# ROMANS

XII.—XVI.

A DEVOTIONAL COMMENTARY

By the

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## NOTE

IN the portion of the Epistle treated in this, the third and concluding, volume of the present work, the entire material lends itself naturally to purposes of devotion. But the Suggestions for Meditation at the end of each chapter are continued for the sake of uniformity with the other two volumes, and also in the hope that they may be found of service in summarising and concentrating attention on the main practical truths of the sections. The Bibliography at the end will again show what books have been used in the production of this work, and the opening chapters of Volume I. should be consulted for all the usual questions of Introduction to the Epistle as a whole.



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# I

## THE PRACTICAL APPEAL

ROM. xii.-xvi.

AFTER doctrine comes duty; after revelation, Rom. responsibility; after principles, practice. We now xii.-xvi.  
turn to the third main division of the Epistle. The The  
Apostle has said, "The just shall *live*" (ch. i. 17). Practical  
But this has been dealt with in ch. vi.-viii. Appeal.  
only in regard to the life of character; it is  
essential to show its meaning in the life of conduct.  
We must observe the three pivots of the Epistle  
suggested by the word "Therefore." In ch. v. 1  
we have the "Therefore" of Justification; in  
ch. viii. 1, the "Therefore" of Sanctification; in  
ch. xii. 1, the "Therefore" of Consecration. This  
is the order: Salvation, Sanctification, Service.  
Only thus can the Christian life be realised and  
truly lived.

Before passing on, it seems essential to review Review of  
the course of thought. The Apostle has shown the Thought.  
how through faith in Christ sinful man is rein-  
stated in righteousness (ch. i.-viii.). The Gospel  
is "the power of God unto salvation" because in it  
the Divine righteousness is revealed (ch. i. 16, 17).  
After man has received that reinstatement in

## The Epistle to the Romans

Rom.  
xii.-xvi.

righteousness which we call Justification (ch. iii. 21-v. 21), St Paul proceeds to describe those relations of the believer which make possible a definite Christian experience (ch. vi.-viii.). These relations are two, to *sin* and to *law*; and in each of them there is the element of death and the element of life. In the first place, the believer is "dead unto sin and alive unto God" (ch. vi. 11); in the next place, he is "dead to the law in order to be married to Him Who is raised from the dead" (ch. vii. 4). This two-fold relationship, involving a break with sin and law, introduces the soul to that ample fellowship with the living Christ which enables him to realise what is meant by the righteousness of God in personal experience. And thus united to Christ in death and life the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer, and he walks "not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (ch. viii. 4).

Righteous-  
ness refused  
by the Jew.

The Apostle has also taught us that this gift of Divine righteousness for guilty man has been deliberately refused by the Jews, the very people who should have been the first to receive it. By their wilful persistence in seeking righteousness in their own way, and in their refusal to accept God's gift of righteousness in Christ, they have become God's enemies, though ultimately they too will abjure their own righteousness and accept the righteousness of God in Christ (ch. ix.-xi).

The Con-  
sequences of  
Righteous-  
ness in Life.

Now we are to see the moral and practical consequences of these doctrines in order that we may reproduce in our life "the fruits of righteous-



## The Practical Appeal

ness" (Phil. i. 11). The Apostle's mind has been **Rom.** convinced, and his heart stirred by the revela- **xii.-xvi.** tion of God's righteousness. It now remains to emphasise the practical, joyous expression of this in daily living. When the soul has entered into the true Christian relation of union with Christ, as taught in the earlier chapters, his life will run along the lines laid down in the section which is now to be considered.

Before entering upon the details it will be well **A General View.** to take a brief view of the general lines of practical application set forth.

I. Foundation Principles of Christian Consecration (ch. xii. 1, 2).

II. Christian Consecration in Ordinary Life (ch. xii. 3-21).

1. Humility in Service (vers. 3-8).
2. Love to the Brethren (vers. 9-13).
3. Love to All (vers. 14-21).

III. Christian Consecration in Relation to the State (ch. xiii. 1-14).

1. Obedience (vers. 1-7).
2. Love (vers. 8-10).
3. Motive to obedience and love (vers. 11-14).

IV. Christian Consecration in Relation to Special Duty (ch. xiv. 1-xv. 13).

1. The weak brother (ch. xiv. 1-12).
2. Principles for the strong (ch. xiv. 13-23).
3. The example of Christ (ch. xv. 1-13).

We have in this a picture of an all-round Christian life, and the material is as systematically arranged as that in the entire doctrinal part which precedes.

## The Epistle to the Romans

Rom.  
xii.-xvi.

As Godet points out, the idea which governs the arrangement of this section is that the Apostle deals successively with the two spheres of the believer's activity; the religious (ch. xii.), and the civil (ch. xiii.). "These are the two domains in which he is to manifest the life of holiness which has been put within him. He acts in the world as a member of the Church and as a member of the State." Godet proceeds to remark that this double walk has one point of departure and one of aim. The point of departure is the consecration of the body as the basis of activity, and the point of aim is the Lord's coming again; and so we have, "a point of departure; two spheres to be simultaneously travelled; a point of arrival. Such in the view of the Apostle is the system of the believer's practical life."

Suggestions  
for  
Meditation.  
Connection  
between  
Doctrine and  
Exhortation.

Three main thoughts are to be pondered at this point.

1. The Fundamental and Essential Connection between Doctrine and Exhortation. There is no contradiction or even incongruity between the preceding teaching about holiness by faith and the practical consequences here emphasised. If it should be thought that Justification inevitably produces Holiness as an absolute necessity, just as the tree bears fruit of itself without any appeal, it is essential to remind ourselves that "moral life is subject to quite different laws from physical life" (Godet). The fact of free-will makes human life unique and necessitates the appropriation and application of grace moment by moment in order

## The Practical Appeal

to realise the Divine purpose. Added to this, **Rom. xii.-xvi.** there is ever before us the fact and power of indwelling sin, and this is an additional call to the use of that Divine grace which is provided for us in Christ, and is only available for us through faith. This is why we are enabled to speak of the righteous man living "by faith." It is by faith he receives Christ for justification; it is by faith he receives Christ for sanctification; and it is equally by faith that he receives Christ by momentary appropriation for that consecration of life in all its parts which the Apostle here delineates. Godet's view of the truth on this point needs careful attention:—

"The believer is *dead unto sin*, no doubt; he has broken with that perfidious friend; but sin is not dead in him, and it strives continually to restore the broken relation. By calling the believer to the conflict against it, as well as to the positive practice of Christian duty, the Apostle is not relapsing into Jewish legalism. He assumes the inward consecration of the believer as an already consummated fact, implicitly contained in his faith, that he proceeds to call him to realise his Christian obligation" (*Romans*, vol. ii., p. 77 f.)

2. Holiness as the Proof of Grace. Let it therefore be constantly before our mind that holiness of life is the supreme, indeed, the only proof that Divine grace is our personal possession. All our professions, our desires, our ideals, our hopes, our intentions, will count for nothing unless we manifest holiness in thought, word, and deed in all the circles of daily life and activity.

Holiness the  
Proof of  
Grace.

## The Epistle to the Romans

Rom.

xii.-xvi.

Holiness the  
Expression  
of Life.

3. Holiness as the Expression of Life. Holiness

is very much more than a proof of our possession of grace :—

“It is the expression of life ; it is the form and action in which life is intended to come out. In our orchards the golden apples are evidences of the tree’s species, and of its life. But a wooden label could tell us the species, and leaves can tell the life. The fruit is more than label or leaf ; it is the thing for which the tree is there” (Moule, *Romans*, “Expositor’s Bible,” p. 325).

It is of the utmost importance that we bear in mind this constant characteristic of Holy Scripture, the close association of humblest duties with the profound revelation of spiritual blessing. As the sun descends millions of miles to open the petals of the tiniest flower, so the highest Christian doctrine is intended to affect the lowliest Christian duties. The interests of morality are sometimes thought to be served best by a foundation of works, but this is not true ; indeed, the truth is just the opposite. The most powerful incentive and the greatest safeguard of morality come from Divine grace. Richard Cecil, one of the greatest Evangelical teachers that ever lived, used to say that if he had to choose between preaching precepts and preaching privileges he would preach privileges, because the latter would inevitably lead to the former, while the former alone could not possibly provide the necessary grace for duty (Moule, *Romans*, “Expositor’s Bible,” p. 323.) The connection between doctrine and exhortation is thus

The  
Safeguard  
of Morality.



## The Practical Appeal

put with all his characteristic quaintness by the **Rom.**  
great Bishop Joseph Hall :— **xii.-xvi.**

“Those that are all in exhortation, no whit in doctrine, are like to them that snuff the lamp, but pour not in oil. Again, those that are all in doctrine, nothing in exhortation, drown the wick in oil, but light it not ; making it fit for use if it had fire put to it ; but as it is, neither capable of good nor profitable for the present. Doctrine without exhortation makes men all brain, no heart ; exhortation without doctrine makes the heart full, but leaves the brain empty. Both together make a man, one makes a wise man, the other a good ; one serves that we may know our duty, the other that we may perform it. Men cannot practise unless they know, and they know in vain if they practise not” (Quoted by C. Neil, *Romans*, p. 380).

We must therefore keep constantly in memory the secret of Christian living. It starts with the acceptance of Christ for justification ; it continues in the constant appropriation of Christ for sanctification, together with that break with sin and law which forms part of our fellowship with Christ. It is impossible for us to live the true life without maintaining this break. We are “dead unto sin” and “dead unto law.” But when we surrender all known sin and break with it in our will, abandoning all efforts of self, we find in Christ the ample source of power for obedience. It is this fellowship with Christ which makes the real Christian life possible. When the branch is truly united to the vine it begins to live its genuine life. We must enter into fellowship with Christ, and then abide

## The Epistle to the Romans

Rom.  
xii.-xvi.

in Him by using the resources made available for us in order that we may reproduce in life the character and conduct of our Master. This is true sanctification, the attitude of abiding in that relation of fellowship with Christ, in which alone it is possible to go forward step by step, having our fruit unto holiness.

## II

# PRINCIPLES OF CONSE- CRATION

ROM. xii. 1, 2

1. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your reasonable service.*

2. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

As every building rests on its foundation, so the Christian life of practical consecration must be based upon principles such as the Apostle here inculcates. Rom. xii.  
I, 2.  
The  
Teacher's  
Spirit.

The tone of the writer is particularly noticeable as he introduces these searching requirements. "I beseech." This is his favourite word (Eph. iv. 1; 1 Thess. iv. 1). "Moses commands; the Apostle exhorts" (Bengel). It is noteworthy that not once in the writings of St Paul do we find him "commanding" his converts. He himself constantly exemplified his own words: "Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy" (2 Cor. i. 24). This is the true spirit for all Christian teachers; the beseeching, pleading, exhorting attitude.

## The Epistle to the Romans

Rom. xii.

I, 2.

The Ground  
of Con-  
secration.

I. *The Ground of Consecration* (ver. 1).—The pivot word “therefore” must be carefully studied (*cf.* Eph. iv. 1). It connects this section with all that has gone before and emphasises the essential unity of doctrine and life. As we have already seen, Christian morality is inextricably related to the Christian revelation. Our relationship to God dominates and determines our attitude to Him, and the new position which is ours in Christ requires and provides for new duties corresponding to it.

“The mercies of God.” These “mercies” are the theme of the former eleven chapters, and the Apostle emphasises “mercies,” not “power” or “authority.” Mercies, too, because salvation is due to them and not to any human merit. The grace that saves has already been established as the foundation principle of salvation, and this is necessarily the ground of all Christian consecration and morality. It is because we are already recipients of the mercies of God that we must and can live the true life. We work *from*, not *for* salvation. Morality needs a dynamic. Conduct requires a power behind it. This is found in “the mercies of God,” in that Gospel which is “the power of God unto salvation” (ch. i. 16). The soul that is united to Christ by faith is ready to learn and to do its duty, for the simple but sufficient reason that it knows it can appropriate without reserve the marvellous resources of Divine grace. It is for this reason that the Apostle emphasises the mercies of God, and exhorts us to place ourselves unreservedly in God’s hands for grace to live the true life.

## Principles of Consecration

### II. *The Character of Consecration* (ver. 1).

Rom. xii.

1. It is voluntary. "Present." This is a term associated with gifts for the Temple (Lev. i. 3; xvi. 7). It occurs in Rom. vi. 13, where it is translated "yield," and thus this chapter closely connects itself with the former section (see also Luke ii. 22; Col. i. 28).

I, 2.

The Character of Consecration.

—Voluntary.

2. It is complete. "Your bodies." A comprehensive phrase, meaning *themselves*—spirit, soul, and body. The body is the instrument of the inner life, and if this is really consecrated it carries the soul and spirit with it. This thought of the body is found frequently in St Paul's teaching. It is fundamental to his complete presentation of the Gospel of Redemption. Christ is the Saviour of the whole man, and redemption necessarily includes spirit, soul, and body. No religion values the body like Christianity. Through the Incarnation we have been delivered from that ancient dualism that considered the body purely materialistic and unworthy of regard. It is through the body that the entire life reveals itself. It is the body that receives impressions, possesses tendencies, and expresses powers; not merely our emotions and energies are to be consecrated to God, every part of our life is to be His. Since we are united inwardly by faith to Christ and our will is already God's, it necessarily only remains to present our body to Him for the purpose of carrying out that will.

—Complete.

3. It is sacrificial. "A living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." The Jewish sacrifices consisted of two main classes: (a) those associated

—Sacrificial.

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xii. 1, 2.** with reconciliation (sin and peace offerings), and (b) those associated with consecration which was based on reconciliation (burnt and meal offerings). It is the latter class with which we are now concerned, just as the former came before us in connection with propitiation in ch. iii. 25. We observe that in Lev. i. the burnt offering comes first as the necessary result of the Jewish believer being on redemption ground by virtue of the great passover sacrifice. In the same way, the Christian is redeemed in order that he may be consecrated. "Christ expiated that the Christian might be dedicated." The Old Testament sacrifices were offerings of dead animals, but the Christian's sacrifice is "living." Yet even so the sacrifice of the Old Covenant represented the life of the offerer, and so now, the Christian's sacrifice is living, because of our new life in Christ (ch. vi. 13). As such, it is "holy" and "well pleasing" to God, for in it our Lord sees "of the travail of His soul and is satisfied" (Isa. liii. 11). When the life of the believer is thus devoted to God the fulness of the Divine purpose is realised, and it can be said of us in our sphere and degree, "This is My beloved son, in whom I am well pleased."

—Practical. 4. It is practical. "Your . . . service." This is the end and outcome of consecration, definite work for God. Not merely for personal salvation, but that "we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life" (Luke i. 74, 75).



## Principles of Consecration

5. It is rational. "Your reasonable service." Rom. xii. 1, 2. Consecration is intelligent as contrasted with the unintelligent offering of the animal in the Jewish sacrifices. The word rendered "rational" is literally "logical," and the phrase may almost be rendered, "your logical service," that is, the service which is the "logical" outcome of our position as believers in Christ. The word refers to an act of the mind, or reason, and Godet well points out that the true meaning is "the service which rationally corresponds to the moral premisses contained in the faith which you profess." Such a service is appropriate to a being like the believer whose essential nature is rational and spiritual. —Rational.

### III. The Demand of Consecration (ver. 2).

The Demand  
of Con-  
secration.

1. Negative. "Be not conformed to this world." The word "world" is literally "age," and is always opposed to "the age to come." It is invariably described as evil (Gal. i. 4), with Satan as its ruling power (2 Cor. iv. 4). Any definition of "world" or "age" is admittedly difficult, but it really means everything in the existing order of things which is outside the kingdom of God. It therefore applies to condition rather than to position, to atmosphere rather than to sphere. The spirit of this present age is absolute selfishness as contrasted with Divine love. Its object is the gratification of self rather than the doing of the will of God, and its authority springs from Satan because it has rejected the one true Ruler of the universe (John xiv. 30; Eph. ii. 2). The believer must therefore avoid taking his shape from the —Negative.



## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xii. 1, 2.** world around. Its life is so entirely different to that which comes from God that it is impossible for the true follower of Christ to be conformed to it. Unless we are particularly careful we shall find ourselves influenced by and fashioned like the world and given up to its spirit and life. All this gives special point to the appeal of the Apostle not to be conformed to the age in which we live, but to be separated in heart and spirit from it. This is the spiritual "nonconformity" required from all Christians.

—**Positive.**     2. Positive. "But be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." The only way to prevent the outward shape of our life from being fashioned like that of the world is to take care that the inward spirit of our being is transformed by the renewing of our mind. The Holy Spirit is to be allowed continually to work in the realm of our intellectual and moral knowledge and thought. The "mind" in Scripture is much more than mere intellect, for it has a moral aspect as well (chs. i. 28; vii. 23, 25; xi. 34). It blends the intellectual and the moral, and may be described as "the faculty by which the soul perceives and discerns the good and the true." As the result of sin this faculty has been injured and disturbed; self has darkened the mind, and led it to regard everything from a purely personal and selfish point of view. It is the Holy Spirit alone Who can renew in us this faculty of mental and moral perception. By reason of sin it is under the power of the flesh, but when delivered from this sway

## Principles of Consecration

and controlled by the Holy Spirit the faculty **Rom. xii.** recovers its power of discernment and is enabled **I, 2.** to realise what is right and true. It is very important to ponder this idea of moral transformation by means of what we *think*. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

(To those who understand Greek the words and tenses of these two phrases will prove of great interest. See Sanday and Headlam on this subject; Lightfoot on Phil. ii. 7; and Gifford, *Incarnation*, pp. 22 ff., 88 ff.)

IV. The Effect of Consecration (ver. 2).—"That ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." The Effect of Consecration.

1. The will of God known, is the first result of —God's Will Known.  
the consecration effected by presenting ourselves to God and by avoiding conformity to the world and becoming transformed within. To "prove" means to prove and approve, to test and attest. It refers to spiritual discernment, which is the inevitable result of inward transformation. "The result of this purification is to make the intellect, which is the seat of moral judgment, true and exact in judging on spiritual and moral questions" (Sanday and Headlam, p. 354). It is only the regenerate who can discern between what is and what is not pleasing to God. The New Testament makes much of spiritual discernment. St Paul prays that the eyes of our heart may be opened (Eph. i. 18), and in his later Epistles places great emphasis on "knowledge," that is, spiritual discernment. Indeed, a favourite word of his means

## The Epistle to the Romans

Rom. xii. 1, 2. "full knowledge," implying maturity of perception which is a mark of the ripening believer. St Peter's second Epistle reveals the same characteristic, for in the short space of three chapters the thought of knowledge, or of "full knowledge" appears several times. Again, in the first Epistle of St John the key-note of the entire writing is "That ye may know," and when the Apostle of Love comes to describe the three stages of the Christian life; the children, the young men, and the fathers, he has nothing more to say about the fathers than the twofold statement that "they know Him that is from the beginning." There is thus no surer mark of a growing, progressive, ripening Christian life than this faculty of spiritual discernment.

—God's Will  
Done.

2. The will of God done, necessarily follows from the knowledge of it, and this is the practical object, outcome, and effect of consecration, for God's will is everything in the believer's life. By the power of the Spirit of Christ he is to make his life in the body the manifestation of God's will as opposed to the realisation of the mind and spirit of the world. And thus:—

"To the false model, presented in every age by the mundane kind of life, there is opposed a perfect kind of type, that of the will of God which is discerned by the renewed mind of the believer, and which he strives to realise, by means of his God-consecrated body, at every moment and in all the relations of his life" (Godet, *Romans*, vol. ii, p. 284).

## Principles of Consecration

3. The will of God *enjoyed*, as well as known **Rom. xii. I, 2.** and done, is suggested by the words "good," "acceptable," and "perfect." By daily consecration we "prove", and thereby "approve" God's will in these three ways, and thus we reach the climax and culmination of Christian consecration, the acceptance and enjoyment of God's will in daily life. Our experience is to be ever progressive, rising from the positive to the comparative and superlative. We are to seek the very best that God can give, and the normal attitude of the spiritual life is that it is at once full and yet always craving for more. Our new experience deepens our capacity for greater blessing, and as we yield ourselves continually to the grace of God, we find His will essentially good, and our obedience well-pleasing to Him, and ethically realising the end for which we are intended. And so the renewed mind obtains a discernment for daily living which leads it to a gladsome service in correspondence with the will of God. That will is free from evil, acceptable to those around us, and in every way complete for human life.

While the entire passage calls for patient, detailed, and prolonged meditation, there are some main thoughts which summarise the Apostle's teaching.

1. *The Basis of Holy Living—Revelation.*—It is of course true that in Matthew Arnold's phrase "conduct is three-fourths of life," but it is equally true that the other fourth is the spring, the source, and the guarantee of the rest, because it concerns

—God's Will  
Enjoyed.

Suggestions  
for  
Meditation.

The Basis  
of Holy  
Living.

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xii.** the motive and the power. At the cost of  
**1, 2.** repetition this thought must be pressed home because it is so often forgotten. If a man stands before one of the great masterpieces of Turner, and is told to reproduce it on a canvas provided for him, he will soon realise his utter helplessness to accomplish the task. The ideal is too high; the genius of the great painter is infinitely above him. But if by some possibility Turner could become incarnated in the man, could see through his eyes, think through his brain, and work through his hand, it would be possible to reproduce the picture because it would be no longer by him, but by Turner dwelling in him. In the same way in morals, the prior question is always as to the power to do what is required. The example of Christ, the will of God, the ideal life; these things are far above our powers, and it is only when Christ dwells in us by the Holy Spirit that they become practical possibilities. This is why the Apostle dwells on "the mercies of God;" these facts about Jesus Christ, which when received into the soul and made vital by the Holy Spirit, guarantee that "power of God" which enables the believer to realise God's ideal for him.

The Method  
of Holy  
Living.

2. *The Method of Holy Living—Consecration.*—This, in a word, is the response of the soul to the mercies of God. As we contemplate what Christ has done, what He is, and what the Holy Spirit gives, our hearts rise up in thankful trust and deep adoration as we yield ourselves to God. Consecration is often found in connection with the



## Principles of Consecration

priesthood of the Old Testament, and the Hebrew word for "consecrate" is quite literally "fill the hand." Rom. xii. 1, 2.

"Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord" (1 Chron. xxix. 5)? That is to say, who is willing to come to God with his hands full, ready for service, with every faculty to be presented to, and used by God?

"I will not work my soul to save,  
For that my Lord has done;  
But I will work like any slave  
For love of His dear Son."

3. *The Outcome of Holy Living—Transformation.*—Not growth, but transformation, which is very much more, and more important. Growth suggests progress, but transformation indicates change. Our Lord "grew," but He never needed to be transformed, because there was nothing in His character that required to be altered. At every stage of His "growth" He was perfect, without any element to mar that perfection, but with the Christian it is different, for when he has come into fellowship with Christ he requires not only growth, but transformation. This transformation, as we have seen, is effected by inward renewal. The mind of Christ takes the place of the mind of self, and just as the new character becomes adjusted to the new conditions, those who are united to Christ and are filled with His Spirit will both grow and become transformed. They will often view themselves, as in the sight of God, with many marks of sinfulness and imperfection, and they will always feel the necessity of basing their acceptance

The  
Outcome of  
Holy Living.

## The Epistle to the Romans

Rom. xii. with God on the gift of His righteousness in Christ,  
1, 2. but with the acceptance will come an ever-increasing  
acceptableness, and this will be the ambition of the  
soul (2 Cor. v. 9, Greek) as it momentarily yields  
itself to God to be possessed and transformed by  
His wondrous grace.



### III

## HUMILITY

### ROM. xii. 3-8

3. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think ; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

4. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office ;

5. So we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

6. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy *let us prophesy* according to the proportion of faith ;

7. Or ministry, *let us wait on our* ministering : or he that teacheth, on teaching ;

8. Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation : he that giveth, *let him do it* with simplicity ; he that ruleth, with diligence ; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

THE principle of Consecration is now to be applied **ROM. xii.** to various aspects and departments of daily life, 3-8. starting from its exercise in the Church (ch. xii. 3-13), and extending to the believer's relations to all men (ch. xii. 14-xiii. 14). St Paul opens with his characteristic phrase, "For I say" (ver. 3), that is, "I will illustrate my meaning." His first message consists of an appeal for Christian humility.

## The Epistle to the Romans

Rom. xii.  
3-8.  
The Call  
Humility.

I. The Call of Humility (ver. 3).—After a right relation to God comes a right relation to our fellow-believers; from the spiritual emerges the social. Humility is the direct effect of consecration, because pride is, and ever has been, the great enemy of true righteousness. Even the Apostle in making this appeal expresses his own true Christian lowliness, for he speaks “through the grace that was given.” He could therefore rightly teach and press this upon them without pride. He makes his appeal to every Christian without exception. “To every man that is among you.” Each one is urged to think soberly of himself, and not to think more highly than he ought to think. This play upon the word “think” is specially noteworthy. The first need of the enlightened mind is the consciousness of our proper attitude to our fellow-Christians and the right use of spiritual gifts. There is an inherent tendency from the highest spiritual life to the lowliest to exalt self, and every form of spiritual pride is disastrous to life and godliness. Each Christian man is only a part of the great whole, and unless his opinion of himself agrees with God’s opinion of him his life will inevitably result in failure. Action is to be strictly limited by the Divine gift; “according as God hath dealt to each man a measure of faith.” Some writers (like Godet) would limit the phrase, “Every man that is among you,” to those who are engaged in some form of ministry, urging that it would be superfluous to use such words if the Apostle merely intended to indicate the members of the Church. But the

## Humility

whole context would seem to imply something **Rom. xii.** wider than purely ministerial gifts, great and varied as they were in the primitive Church. It is a solemn and searching thought that upon every-one some gift has been bestowed (Eph. iv. 7). It must be used. On the other hand, it is equally important to remember that no one Christian possesses all the gifts. Accordingly, we are to minister our gift just as we have received it, neither more nor less, "as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Pet. iv. 10).

II. The Reason for Humility (vers. 4, 5).—The **The Reason for Humility.** fact that there is a variety of gifts in the Christian Church constitutes one main reason why each Christian man should be humble. No one can possess and exercise all the gifts, and it is obviously impossible for every Christian to take the lead and occupy the most important places. As the vine has many branches, and the body many members, so the Christian Church is made up of a large number of individual members, each with his own gift, intended to be exercised in its proper place and way. Our duty, therefore, is to note our province and to stay there, to recognise our limitations and work accordingly. Usefulness is never increased by going beyond our proper sphere. The Church is an organism rather than an organisation, and this figure of the body with its several members is a definite reminder of the place and limits of each individual Christian. St Paul amplifies the figure in 1 Cor. xii. 12-27. Three great thoughts are thus emphasised, or at least suggested in these

## The Epistle to the Romans

Rom. xii. 3-8. words: Unity, Diversity, and Harmony. And it is only when all three are realised and blended that the Church of Christ can live its true life and do its proper work. We may vary the old phrase and say that in the Church of Christ there is "a place for everyone and everyone in his place," and the more thoroughly we face this two-fold truth the more effectively will the work of the Church be done. The trouble is that there is far too little of this recognition of different gifts and different spheres in the one body of Christ.

"What good work is there which is not in more or less continual danger of suffering, or even being abandoned, because fellow-Christians, zealous fellow-Christians, will plainly, and it must be wilfully, yield to the ambition to be first: will not be content to be second or third: will not do the unobtrusive work: will think 'How can I shine?' rather than 'How can I serve?'" (Gore, *Romans*, vol. ii., p. 112).

### The Expression of Humility

III. The Expression of Humility (vers. 6-8).—Humility will therefore show itself in a variety of ways according to the gifts that we possess and the work we have to do. While there are different functions there will be one Spirit actuating everything. Seven ministerial gifts are mentioned here. The first four are official: prophecy, teaching, ministry, exhortation. The last three are general: giving, ruling, showing mercy. Prophecy is put first as the most important. It was the inspired declaration of the will of God. It did not necessarily consist of prediction, but of proclamation, the announcement of the Gospel in the power of the

## Humility

Holy Spirit (1 Cor. xiv. 1-5 ; Eph. ii. 20 ; iii. 5). **Rom. xii.**

This prophetic work is to be done "according to 3-8.

the proportion of faith." The phrase is perhaps best interpreted of the prophet's own faith in relation to God. He is to prophesy within the limits of his own trustful insight, according to the measure given to him by God. Most writers take this view, though others (Godet in part, Philippi, and Liddon) prefer to understand it as prophecy according to the proportion of "the faith," that is, the substance of the Gospel. Godet suggests that while the original meaning is personal faith, it also implies that the prophet should exercise it in connection with the whole Church, and this, according to Philippi, comes in substance to "the faith," the collective normal faith of the community. If this is the true interpretation, the prophet is to proclaim each side of the truth in turn. But it may be questioned whether this view of faith, as "that which we believe," is quite so early as the Epistle to the Romans. It seems far better to understand by the phrase that the prophet is to proclaim the message God has given him to deliver, neither more nor less.

It is important for a man to express *all*, and yet not more than his faith warrants. Each has something to say for God. Let him see that no false humility prevents him from expressing it fully.

In the case of ministry, or teaching, or exhortation, the Christian is to give himself to his own special work. He is to exist in, and to be absorbed

## The Epistle to the Romans

Rom. xii. 3-8. by his own service. He is to know his province and abide therein.

The three general gifts are equally important. "He that giveth" is to do it with liberality, communicating freely of his own possessions for the good of the community. "He that ruleth" is to proceed with earnestness and singlemindedness, remembering the need of impartiality. "He that shows mercy" is to do it with cheerfulness. The word is literally identical with our English term, "hilarity," and

"denotes the joyful eagerness, the amiable grace, the affability going the length of gaiety, which make the visitor, whether man or woman, a sunbeam penetrating into the sick-chamber and to the heart of the afflicted" (Godet, *Romans*, vol. ii., p. 293).

This point of cheerfulness, brightness, joyousness in Christian work is specially important. It is not so very many years ago that an advertisement appeared in a religious paper for a clergyman who was to be "pious but cheerful"; and on another occasion a little girl said of a certain clergyman, "He must be an excellent man, he looks so sad." Christianity is the opposite of sadness, and it is a duty to show by our manner and words that "the joy of the Lord is our strength."

As we contemplate afresh these various gifts we realise that their differences are intended to be expressed on every occasion, because our exercise of them is with a view to the Body of Christ and not to our own individual desires and preferences. A clear recognition of what we possess and a



## Humility

whole-hearted determination to exercise our gift to **Rom. xii.** the utmost will form the best possible means of 3-8. glorifying God and blessing those around us.

IV. The Secret of Humility (vers. 3, 6).—The **The Secret of Humility.** Apostle does not fail to remind us how all this humility is possible. "According as God hath dealt to each man a measure of faith" (ver. 3). "Gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us" (ver. 6). The recognition that all we are and possess comes from God is the constant safeguard against pride. We are members one of another, and, as such, we are to be humble. This can only be realised by finding out God's will for us, and this in turn will only be practicable by keeping close to God. The fact that all our powers are gifts, not attainments, Divine graces, not human accomplishments, will ever tend to keep us humble and true to God.

1. Humility the Primary Need. It is significant **Suggestions for Meditation.** that humility comes immediately after the emphasis on consecration. Pride takes various forms. It prevents the sinner from accepting God's gift. It led the Jews to refuse and reject Jesus Christ of Nazareth as "the Lord our Righteousness." But of all forms of pride spiritual pride is the most specious and deadly. The soul may be very easily tempted to think that because the life is wholly devoted to God it may disregard all else in the contemplation of this wonderful privilege and honour. It is against the possibility of this spirit that the Apostle teaches us that consecration will express itself in humility. A right relationship to



## The Epistle to the Romans

Rom. xii. 3-8. our fellow-believers who are presumably equally consecrated to God with ourselves is to be instantly recognised and fully realised. Indeed, our life of humility among our brethren is only second to the surrender of our life to God. A consecrated believer is to seek at once from his Divine Lord a true, modest estimate of himself. Humility has been defined as "unconscious self-forgetfulness." It is certainly "the most beautiful flower in the Christian garden," and the more the Apostolic direction is followed the more completely will our Christianity be recommended. There is perhaps no form of Christlikeness so beautiful and so influential as "being clothed with humility."

2. Humility the Perfect Possibility. And for this God has made abundant provision in Christ. There is no excuse for pride, nor any justification for that false humility which tends to think that it has no gift, or "talent." To everyone something has been given in the great provision of righteousness, and this may be expressed and manifested to the praise and glory of God, and to the blessing of those around us. For humility, as for everything else, the word is true: "My grace is sufficient for thee."

## IV

# BROTHER-LOVE

ROM. xii. 9-13

9. *Let* love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil ; cleave to that which is good.

10. *Be* kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love ; in honour preferring one another ;

11. Not slothful in business ; fervent in spirit ; serving the Lord ;

12. Rejoicing in hope ; patient in tribulation ; continuing instant in prayer ;

13. Distributing to the necessity of saints ; given to hospitality.

FROM the thought of humility the idea of love Rom. xii. naturally follows, for humility will necessarily ex- 9-13.

press itself in affection for those around. Indeed, in the closing words of the preceding verse the thought of love is already present, and now it is to be abundantly illustrated. This connection between humility and love seems worthy of special note.

Godet says, "First self-limiting, self-possessing : this is what he has just been recommending ; then self-giving : this is what he proceeds to expound."

In the present section the sphere for the exercise of love is the Church of God, and this brings before us the specific Christian idea of "brother-love" or "Brother-*philadelphia*. It is a little unfortunate that our Love."

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xii. 9-13.** English versions render this "brotherly love," which means "brother-like love," or love similar to that of brethren. But the true idea is very much more, and means "brother-love," that is, love because we are brethren. The prominence given to this grace in the New Testament is quite striking (1 Thess. iv. 9; Heb. xiii. 1; 1 Pet. i. 22; iii. 8; 2 Pet. i. 7). It is the carrying out of our Lord's words, "A new commandment give I unto you" (John xiii. 34, 35), and a careful consideration of His actual words shows clearly that the "newness" lies in the object of love, for three times in two verses we find the words "one another." Love to fellow-Christians was an entirely new fact based on an entirely new tie.

The  
Principle of  
Love.

The principle of love is first of all laid down in the opening words, "Let love be without dissimulation," and then the fact and sincerity of love are brought before us in a variety of ways. Let us dwell a little on the fundamental principle. Love is to be sincere; "without dissimulation," and we may add, without simulation. There must be no hiding of what we are, or pretending to what we are not. Feigned love is the most horrible thing in life, and a pretence to brother-love is wholly harmful to self, to our brother, and to the world. This emphasis on the sincerity of love is very characteristic of St Paul, for elsewhere he speaks of "love unfeigned" (2 Cor. vi. 6), just as previously he had spoken of giving with "single mindedness." The same call to genuineness is associated with faith (2 Tim. i. 5), and love (2 Cor. viii. 8), just as in like

## Brother-Love

manner St John urges us to a love which is not in Rom. xii. word or in tongue, "but in deed and in truth" (1 John 9-13. iii. 18). When this absolute transparency of love is once realised we are prepared to look at the twelve aspects which are in turn brought before us.

I. The Sensitiveness of Love (ver. 9).—"Abhor that which is evil." The Christian soul is to hate and shrink from what is wrong. The power of love to hate that which is not good is one of the prime marks of a true life. Unless there is this scorn of and opposition to evil our love is lacking an essential feature. The Sensitiveness of Love.

II. The Purity of Love (ver. 9).—"Cleave to that which is good." The use of the word "cleave" in the Old and New Testaments offers much opportunity for thoughtful, practical meditation. It of course implies the closest possible adherence. Indeed, one writer suggests that the Apostle's injunction is literally, "Be glued to that which is good." The Old Testament is full of the thought of "cleaving to the Lord" (Josh. xxiii. 8; 2 Kings xviii. 6). Our love will necessarily show itself in this determination to hold fast by that which is good. The Purity of Love.

III. The Reality of Love (ver. 10).—"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brother-love." Here specially and definitely we have the reminder of the new family tie in Christ, and the call to show it in thoroughness and reality of affection. This brother-love is one of the proofs of real discipleship. The Reality of Love.

"We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren" (1 John

## The Epistle to the Romans

Rom. xii. 9-13. iii. 14). And while we are to do good unto all men we are specially to exercise our goodness towards "the household of faith" (Gal. vi. 10). No wonder that in the early Church the heathen were so deeply impressed with the new spirit as to say, "Behold how these Christians love one another."

The Humility  
of Love.

IV. *The Humility of Love* (ver. 10).—"In honour preferring one another." The Church has been described as "the noblest school of courtesy," and the Apostle's words mean that every Christian man is to "lead the way" in giving honour to his fellow-believers. He is to regard others by preference to himself and thereby show the true spirit of humble love. It is a beautiful paradox that each one is to do this to all others (Phil. ii. 3, 17; 1 Thess. v. 13). If only this spirit of preference for others, and determination to sink our own position and reputation had been more in evidence in the Christian Church, what differences it would have made in individual and corporate life.

The Faith-  
fulness of  
Love.

V. *The Faithfulness of Love* (ver. 11).—"Not slothful in zeal." The familiar word "business" is not to be understood in its modern sense, but in the quite literal idea of "busy-ness" or earnestness. In point of earnestness the Christian man is not to be slothful; "in zeal not flagging" (Sanday and Headlam). Or as Luther remarks, "Be not lazy as to what you ought to do." It is equivalent to the Old Testament word, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might," (Eccles. ix. 10.)

## Brother-Love

VI. The Earnestness of Love (ver. 11).—Rom. xii. 9-13.  
 “Fervent in spirit.” This is the inward attitude, as the former phrase expresses the outward. In our spirit we are to be “boiling.” Our Lord rebuked the Church of Ephesus for having left its first love (Rev. ii. 4), and a still more solemn word was uttered to the Church of Laodicea, wishing that it were either cold or hot (Rev. iii. 15). Among our Lord’s prophecies of the future was one to the effect that the love of many would “wax cold” (Matt. xxiv. 12). All the more reason, therefore, for the Christian life to be full of fervency.

VII. The Genuineness of Love (ver. 11).—The Genuineness of Love.  
 “Serving the Lord.” Some few manuscript authorities favour the word “season,” or “time,” instead of “Lord,” in which case we should understand the injunction to mean, “Use the present opportunity to the best of your ability.” But it seems in every way preferable to adhere to the familiar reading, and to understand it to mean that in all our service the one supreme principle must be our relation to Jesus Christ. Whatever we do to others it will always have Him and His Glory for its supreme object.

VIII. The Buoyancy of Love (ver. 12).—The Buoyancy of Love.  
 “Rejoicing in hope.” This was a very pertinent injunction in the presence of suffering and tribulation, for there was doubtless a tendency from time to time to fear the overwhelming pressure of outside forces. Against all this the Apostle urges the Christians to joy and hope. “In the matter of



## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xii. 9-13.** hope, rejoicing." In the midst of all their tribulations there was the one hope of future glory in which they were to "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." If only they walked by faith and not by sight, they would by patient continuance in well-doing be enabled to exult in hope of the glory of God (ch. v. 2).

The  
Endurance  
of Love.

IX. The Endurance of Love (ver. 12).—"Patient in tribulation." This is the other side of the experience. The same hope which causes joy is intended to guarantee patience. The joy comes at the contemplation of the future prospects; the patience is to be exercised under the pressure of present sufferings. Like their Master, the Roman Christians were to live with their minds occupied with the future, as they suffered day by day in the present. "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross" (Heb. xii. 2).

The  
Devotion of  
Love.

X. The Devotion of Love (ver. 12).—"Continuing instant in prayer." The connection of prayer with hope and tribulation is particularly interesting, because it is through prayer that we are enabled to rise above our present circumstances and fix our hope more steadfastly on the coming glory. The familiar phrase "Continuing instant," represents a picturesque word in the original. We might render the whole phrase, "In the matter of prayer, staunch." It suggests the idea of firm adherence and constant waiting, and the various connections of the term illustrate the true attitude of the soul. Thus it is used of the little boat that was to "wait on our Lord continually" (Mark iii. 9). It is connected



## Brother-Love

with the prayer-life of the primitive Church **Rom. xii. 9-13.** (Acts i. 14; ii. 46). It is associated with the ministry of the Word of God (Acts ii. 42; vi. 4). And it is employed by St Paul in at least two other passages in connection with prayer (Eph. vi. 18; Col. iv. 2).

The three thoughts of hope, suffering, and prayer, are thus helpfully associated in Hofmann's phrase of the verse:—

“In so far as we have cause to hope, let us be joyful; in so far as we have cause of pain, let us hold out; in so far as the door of prayer is open to us, let us continue to use it” (Quoted by Godet, *Romans*, vol. ii., p. 297).

XI. The Unselfishness of Love, (ver. 13).—“Dis-tributing to the necessity of saints.” The word “saint” as descriptive of all Christians calls for renewed attention. Its simple meaning is “belonging to God,” and it refers invariably to our position, not our condition, to our standing in Christ, not our actual state. It is most unfortunate that the word has been so frequently associated with an exceptional holiness, when it means nothing of the kind, but only the actual fact that from the moment of conversion every Christian soul is consecrated and devoted to God, and belongs to Him (Rom. xvi. 1, 2; 1 Cor. i. 2; vi. 2). The needs of God's people must have been great at the time these words were written, and we know how keen St Paul was in encouraging the Gentiles to help their poorer brethren in Jerusalem. In the same way he appeals to all the Christians in Rome to communicate to

The Unselfishness of Love.

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xii. 9-13.** their fellow-believers whatever might be necessary, and this duty was one which the earliest Christians evidently performed with remarkable generosity (Acts iv. 34, 35; xi. 27-30; Rom. xv. 25-27; 2 Cor. viii. 1-4; ix. 1-4).

**The Large-heartedness of Love.**

XII. The Large-heartedness of Love (ver. 12).—"Given to hospitality." Christian hospitality was another characteristic prominent in New Testament life (1 Tim. iii. 2; Tit. i. 8; Heb. xiii. 2; 1 Pet. iv. 9), and the thought underlying the Apostle's exhortation is that they were not to wait to be asked, but on the contrary, to be ready to welcome their fellow-Christians, keeping "open house." This hospitality was a point of very great importance in the primitive Church when "it had begun to appreciate with full consciousness the importance of inter-communication" (Ramsay, *The Church and the Roman Empire*, p. 288. See also p. 368).

All these aspects of love should be closely studied in the text of Scripture and under the guidance of a good Commentary in order that the words and phrases may be understood, and their full meaning and practical power elicited. We see that the Epistle is at once individualistic and corporate. The Christian who is related to Christ soon finds that he is associated with others in common life, common grace, common needs, common duties, common hopes.

**Suggestions for Meditation.**

1. The Connection of Humility and Love. After thus dwelling on each separate section of this very practical appeal of the Apostle it may be

## Brother-Love

well to revert once more to the close and essential **Rom. xii.** connection between humility and love, as seen in **9-13.** this and the preceding sections. These two aspects of Christian living show how essential it is to realise that the first elements in true righteousness are to be expressed in a lowly, loving fellowship with our brethren as we endeavour to fulfil to the utmost our duties as members of Christ, and members one of another. Faith is to work by love, and love will naturally express itself first of all towards those who belong with us to the family of God. The more we can reproduce this spirit of humility and brotherly affection the more thoroughly we shall glorify God and recommend our Christianity to others.

2. The Secret of Humility and Love. Never may we tire of emphasising Divine Grace as the source and guarantee of consecrated life. It is by the "gentleness of Christ" (2 Cor. x. 1) we become humble in the power of the fruit of the Spirit "gentleness" (Gal. v. 22). And it is by the love of Christ shed forth in the soul (ch. v. 5) that love to others becomes possible.

## V

# LOVE

### ROM. xii. 14-21

14. Bless them which persecute you : bless, and curse not.

15. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

16. *Be* of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

17. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

18. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

19. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath : for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine ; I will repay, saith the Lord.

20. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him ; if he thirst, give him drink ; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

21. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

**Rom. xii. 14-21.** THE same spirit of love is still before us, though in this section the exercise of it is directed to "them that are without." The Christian has social relationships and duties to others besides his fellow-Christians, and just as verses 9-13 are concerned with love which is exercised mainly in an atmosphere of sympathy, so here in verses 14-21 it is to be shown mainly to those who are

## Love

hostile to Christianity. As Dr John Brown Rom. xii.  
14-21.  
remarks:—

"Having thus stated how the Roman Christians ought to behave to their fellow-sufferers, the Apostle proceeds to show how they should conduct themselves to the authors of their sufferings" (Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans, p. 467).

In verses 17-19 the passive attitude of forbearance is the main thought, while in verses 20, 21, the active form of beneficence is urged. Love is the principal thought, giving unity to the whole section, and every word and phrase calls for careful consideration.

I. Love blessing our Persecutors. (ver. 14).— Love  
blessing our  
Persecutors.  
"Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not." It is suggestive that the word in verse 13, translated "given to," is literally "pursuing," and is identical with the "persecutors" of this verse. Thus we are to "pursue" hospitality, and we are also to bless those who "pursue" us. It is a very different "pursuit," and a truly severe test of the Christian life is here afforded. The words are an echo of the Sermon on the Mount. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you" (Matt. v. 10, 11). If we acknowledge God in all our ways we shall seek for grace to say with David, "Let him curse" (2 Sam. xvi. 10).

II. Love interesting itself in Others. (ver. 15).— Love  
interesting  
itself in  
Others.  
"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." It is comparatively easy

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xii. 14-21.** to "weep with them that weep," but much more difficult to "rejoice with them that rejoice." We find it a simple matter to condole, but not so simple to congratulate. The reason is that the latter calls for much more unselfishness and the entire absence of any envy or jealousy at another's success. But self-forgetfulness will enable us to do both, and thereby to manifest the true spirit of Christ in deep interest for others.

**Love  
finding  
Points of  
Agreement.**

III. *Love finding Points of Agreement* (ver. 16). —"Be of the same mind one toward another." We are to have the same concern for the welfare of others as for our own. This spirit of disinterested thought of others is one of the finest elements of the Christian character. It is so easy to accentuate differences and to overlook elements that tend to unite. But if we have the same solicitude for the well-being of others as we have for our own, it will enable us to be of "the same mind one toward another." As the Apostle says elsewhere, we are in lowliness of mind to esteem others better than ourselves (Phil. ii. 3).

**Love  
spurning  
unworthy  
Ambitions.**

IV. *Love spurning unworthy Ambitions* (ver. 16).—"Mind not high things." Another call to humility. It is impossible not to recall the Apostle John's solemn word about Diotrephes, "Who loveth to have the pre-eminence" (3 John 9). We can see what trouble was thereby caused in the Church. The contrast to this is found in the only other place where the same word occurs, "That in all things He might have the pre-eminence" (Col i. 18).



## Love

When Christ is first in our life it is impossible to "mind high things." Rom. xii.  
14-21.

V. Love consorting with the Lowly (ver. 16).—Love  
consorting  
with the  
Lowly.  
"Condescend to men of low estate." The word "condescend" is a little unfortunate because of its modern idea of unworthy patronage. Here the meaning is something very different, and is literally "Let yourselves be carried away with." It is also found in Gal. ii. 13. In its good sense it suggests the necessity and wisdom of accommodating ourselves to people and things very different from ourselves and our own tastes. The R.V. renders the phrase, "things," not "men," and, as far as the Greek is concerned, it may refer to either. Tyndale renders the verse, "Make yourselves equal to them of the lower sorte;" and another version has, "Let yourselves be drawn away with lowly things." We must avoid anything in the way of cliques or coteries exclusively bent on their own special interests, and instead we must give ourselves to everybody and everything alike, showing preference, if preference be necessary, to men and things outside our own sphere. We can readily see how searching a test this is of true spirituality.

VI. Love avoiding Self-Esteem (ver. 16).—"Be not wise in your own conceits." Love  
avoiding  
Self-Esteem.  
There is nothing more despicable than conceit, especially as it is almost invariably associated, not with real gifts, but with their absence. It is the empty and shallow man who is vain. The corn when it is green is upright, but when it is ripe it bends low.

## The Epistle to the Romans

Rom. xii.  
14-21.

Love  
refusing to  
take  
Revenge.

VII. Love refusing to take Revenge (ver. 17).—  
“Recompense to no man evil for evil.” There is an intimate connection between the self-forgetfulness of the preceding verses and the love which is here shown to be exercised in pardoning evil done to us. It is well known that pride is easily wounded, and as easily is ready to take vengeance, and yet there is nothing more Christlike than the grace of forbearance, and nothing more calculated to recommend the Gospel to others. As Sir Matthew Hale once said, “Though it is manly to punish, it is God-like to forgive.”

Love en-  
deavouring  
to Attract.

VIII. Love endeavouring to Attract (ver. 17).—  
“Provide things honourable in the sight of all men.” The word “honourable” is literally “beautiful,” and when read thus it shows very plainly the need of attractiveness in the Christian life. “Provide things beautiful.” We read of the beauty of holiness,” and if we take our Lord’s words literally we may read, “I am the Beautiful Shepherd” (John x. 11). When St Paul urges upon his converts the importance and necessity of good works, sometimes he uses a word which means that which is intrinsically good. But at other times, especially in the Pastoral Epistles, he uses a word which means that which is also outwardly attractive. “Let our’s learn to maintain beautiful works” (Tit. iii. 14). The thought of “providing” is also to be noticed. We are to use forethought to disarm enmity by means of that which is morally and spiritually attractive:—

“It is a happy thing when worldly men are con-

## Love

strained to say of a Christian what Tertullian makes **Rom. xii.**  
a heathen say of a Christian in his time, 'He is an **14-21.**  
excellent man, that Caius Servius, only he is a  
Christian'" (John Brown, *Exposition of the Epistle to*  
*the Romans*, p. 474).

There is no contradiction between this injunction  
and that of "contending earnestly for the faith"  
(Jude 3). As Haldane points out, we must never  
sacrifice truth to peace, and we must be willing, if  
necessary, to be unpopular if thereby alone we can  
be faithful to the trust committed to us. While,  
therefore, we fulfil the pastoral injunction and  
maintain with earnestness the true faith of Christ,  
we must be particularly careful lest in our  
championship of the truth the "old Adam" creeps  
in and really spoils our testimony. It is only too  
possible to be faithful in a hard, not to say censorious  
spirit, and while we may think we are only loyal  
and true to our trust, our testimony is being  
coloured by the hard, bitter spirit with which we  
express it.

IX. Love keeping the Peace (ver. 18).—"If it be **Love**  
possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with **keeping the**  
all men." Every part of this injunction needs **Peace.**  
attention. "If it be possible" seems to refer to  
those around us. "As much as lieth in you,"  
naturally refers to our own attitude, because as to  
this, we have the power of exercising control.  
Thus, according to the old saying, "It takes two to  
make a quarrel"; and this endeavour to keep the  
peace will mean hard work, but it will be worth  
while. This is another echo of our Lord's words,

## The Epistle to the Romans

Rom. xii. 14-21. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. v. 9).

Love  
entrusting  
its Cause to  
God.

X. Love entrusting its Cause to God (ver. 19).—  
—"Avenge not yourselves, but give place unto wrath." Twice St Paul uses the phrase, "Give place," here and in Eph. iv. 27. In the present passage we are to make room for wrath, to stand on one side as it comes rushing towards us, allowing it to go past leaving us untouched and unharmed. But in the other case we are not to "give place to the devil." On the contrary we are to withstand him, and when we see him coming, to take up our position boldly, knowing that if we resist he will flee. One writer thinks that the passage here means, "Give room for God's wrath to work." But this thought does not seem to be introduced until the quotation from the Old Testament, "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." If we take care of our character God will take care of our interests. He is absolutely just, and we can fully trust Him to plead our cause and guard our position.

Love  
returning  
Good for  
Evil.

XI. Love returning Good for Evil (ver. 20).—  
"If thine enemy hunger, feed him." This is the very opposite of the policy of the world, and when it is exercised it will have the effect of heaping "coals of fire" on the head of our enemy. This must mean "coals of red-hot love," involving the fire of shame (Prov. xxv. 21 and 22). Of course it cannot possibly refer to punishment, but to the best possible kind of revenge, the fire that melts the ore in the furnace.

## Love

XII. Love winning the True Victory (ver. 21).— Rom. xii. 14-21. Love Winning the True Victory.  
 “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” Here as the crowning point we have the expulsive power of goodness. This is the true secret of Christianity, and nothing like this is to be found anywhere among the nations and teachers before the time of Christ. The thought of overcoming evil with good only became possible through the redemptive love of God in Christ (see Dr John Brown, *Romans*, p. 482).

It is noteworthy that in this passage there are three distinct references to the book of Proverbs, indicating the Apostle’s knowledge and use of the Old Testament. A Christian merchant was in the habit of giving a copy of Proverbs to every boy who came into his establishment. He considered it the best book of practical ethics available for human life.

As we review this and the former sections we should note that verses 9-21 are no mere cluster of spiritual rules or regulations. One theme, that of love, runs throughout, and it is another version of the great chapter on love in 1 Corinthians xiii. It covers the entire range of our religious and social life.

1. Being and Doing. The emphasis is on Being rather than on Doing, and on Doing as the result and expression of Being. While the active and passive sides are balanced, yet the chief emphasis is on what we are rather than on what we do. This is always characteristic of New Testament morality (see Moule, *Romans*, “Expositor’s Bible,” p. 346). Suggestions for Meditation.



## The Epistle to the Romans

Rom. xii.  
14-21.

The writers are much more concerned with our character than with our conduct, because they feel sure that if the former is right the latter will be right also. Some years ago a missionary was leaving China for a furlough at home, and before sailing Mr Hudson Taylor said to him, "When you get into the Homeland and speak at meetings, never mind about China." The missionary was surprised, but quickly understood the meaning when Mr Taylor added, "Never mind about China, but when you get before your audiences may this be your constant prayer, that you may be able by the Spirit of God to bring all those who hear you face to face with Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ will take care of China." In like manner we may say, without any hesitation, that if we take care of our character our conduct will take care of itself. As is the source, so will be the stream.

2. The Supreme Power for Being and Doing. These blessed and glorious practical details of the life of righteousness are such as the law cannot accomplish, but the Spirit of Christ can work them in the believer. Self-effort is unfruitful, but the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus is the source of love, and the possession of life is proved by the practice of love.

3. The Outcome of Being and Doing. A careful consideration and a detailed personal application of all these aspects of love reveals to us what true Christianity means in relation to those around us. What a difference it would make if our home



## Love

life, our Church life, and all our relations to Rom. xii. others were actuated by this spirit. Our pro- 14-21. fessions of full consecration will go for nothing unless this spirit of Christlikeness actuates us in all our dealings with our fellow-men.

## VI

# CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP

### ROM. xiii. 1-7.

1. Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

2. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

3. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:

4. For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.

5. Wherefore *ye* must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.

6. For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.

7. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

**Rom. xiii. 1-7.** In chapter xii. the Apostle dealt with the obligations of love which are directly spiritual and fraternal. But the believer has other relationships besides these, and it is to some of them that attention is now to be drawn. Just as chapter xii. treats of spiritual duties to our fellow-Christians and to others, so chapter xiii. deals with our natural

## Christian Citizenship

relationships, especially in regard to civic and civil duties. The Christian is a citizen as well as a Church member, and, as such, his duties must be carefully performed. This is another application of the great law of righteousness under which the soul is to live. There is a natural transition from the thought of peace in the closing verses of the preceding chapter to our duty to the State, as here inculcated. Rom. xiii. 1-7.

The reference to the relation of the Christian to the State is very rare in St Paul's Epistles (1 Tim. ii. 2). It seems pretty clear, therefore, that there must have been some local circumstances to account for the present emphasis. The Jews at Rome were notorious for their turbulence. Their ideas of their position and theocracy made submission to government by Gentiles intolerable, and they had lately rebelled and suffered expulsion (Acts xviii. 2). Since Christians were regarded by many as a Jewish sect, a suspicion of revolutionary tendencies was easily turned against them. All this may have weighed with the Apostle in bringing this matter forward. There may have been danger also lest the Christians should be misled by false ideas of the kingdom of Christ and its relation to the kingdoms of the world, and as in Rome Christianity was naturally brought face to face with the Imperial power, it was essential that the true relations of Christians to the State should be clearly defined. But whether local circumstances account for this reference or not, it is the permanent principle, and no mere local need, that is mainly emphasised. Christians and the State.

## The Epistle to the Romans

Rom. xiii. The chapter may be analysed as follows :

1-7. (a) Vers. 1-7 : The Christian's duty to the State.

(b) Vers. 8-10 : The Christian's duty to the citizens of the State.

(c) Vers. 11-14 : The Christian enforcement of these civil duties. It is the first of these which must now occupy our attention.

The Duty of  
Civil  
Obedience.

I. The Duty of Civil Obedience (ver. 1).—"Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers." Not a single Christian is exempt from obedience to the State. Submission is the great law (1 Pet. ii. 13-17). The description of the State as "the higher powers" is particularly noteworthy, both in the light of the Apostle's day, and also of our own.

The Reason  
for Civil  
Obedience.

II. The Reason for Civil Obedience (ver. 1).—"For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." Civil authority thus derives its source and sanction from God Himself. Society needs government, and this proves that God intended man to live under authority. But He has not laid down any definite form, so that the principle of governmental authority can take any form, so long as it has authority. Bad conduct tends to weaken, good conduct to strengthen authority.

The Denial  
of Civil  
Obedience.

III. The Denial of Civil Obedience (ver. 2).—Resistance to the power of the State is condemned as equivalent to resistance to God Himself. It is of course true that we are not to do at the bidding of the State that which is morally wrong, but short of this, submission, not resistance, is the Christian law.

The question has been asked whether St Paul's

## Christian Citizenship

teaching forbids Christians taking part in a rebellion. **Rom. xiii.**

It is obvious that Christians can agitate for better **i-7.**

government, but must they, according to this passage, never oppose the government that exists?

In reply, it should be observed that two things are omitted here: (1) the Christian's duty if the State should persecute Christianity; (2) the Christian's duty if the State should fail to do its duty. We must therefore be careful not to read into the Apostle's word what is not found here. At the same time, every one admits that rebellion is only to be regarded as the very last resource. The Christian will be slow to head a rebellion, but where circumstances absolutely compel, there does not seem anything in this passage to prohibit it.

**IV. *The Vindication of Civil Obedience* (vers. 3, 4).—****The Vindication of Civil Obedience.** Additional reasons for submission are here adduced. Civil government has a providential purpose, for rulers are really servants of God. They cause no fear or trouble to those who do their duty, but only to the evil-doers. The Apostle himself often used the Roman authority for personal protection (Acts xviii. 12-17; xix. 35-41; xxii. 25). This is a remarkable testimony to the essentially Divine character of civil authority. Twice the civil ruler is called "the minister of God," and the word is all the more striking when it is remembered that it is used in connection with the Temple services.

**V. *The Spirit of Civil Obedience* (ver. 5).—****The Spirit of Civil Obedience.** A further step is here taken, and the Apostle inculcates his teaching, not merely on the ground of

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xiii. 1-7.** expediency, but for moral reasons as well. Principle as well as prudence is involved. Not only are we to be afraid of the consequences of disobedience to the State, but we are to obey "for conscience sake." This reference to conscience suggests both the spirit and the limit of obedience. As the State governs in God's name, it must not do anything contrary to God's law. Hence this teaching, as Godet points out, leaves the Christian free to witness against the State if it should prove necessary (See Moule, *Romans*, "Expositor's Bible," p. 353).

The  
Illustration  
of Civil  
Obedience.

VI. The Illustration of Civil Obedience (ver. 6).—An example is now given from the payment of taxes. "Ye pay," states a fact and acknowledges the truth of verse 5. This is one of the simplest and yet clearest instances of our duty to the government under which we live.

The Call to  
Civil  
Obedience.

VII. The Call to Civil Obedience (ver. 7).—The teaching is now summed up by a practical appeal. "Render to all their dues." Four aspects of civil authority are mentioned: (1) Personal, or property taxes, "Tribute to whom tribute is due;" (2) Export, or import, "Custom to whom custom;" (3) Fear, or veneration of the chief authority, "Fear to whom fear;" (4) Honour, or respect to his subordinates, "Honour to whom honour." Nothing could be finer than this emphasis on duty and courtesy, and, again, we cannot help recalling our Lord's own words about the true ministry of service as expressive of the noblest, highest life (Matt. xx. 25-28).



## Christian Citizenship

These are refreshing lessons for Christians in **Rom. xiii.** relation to the country in which they live. Let us **I-7.** mark carefully the principles here emphasised. **Suggestions for Meditation.**

1. How beautifully applicable is this Teaching to every form of Government. Whatever country may be ours and whatever the form of authority these great principles apply. The institution of the State is according to the will and plan of God. But while the Divine right of civil authority is plainly asserted, no particular aspect, or method of it is necessarily expressive of the Divine will.

2. How clearly the Apostle insists on the Christian's fulfilment of his Duties to the State. They are as truly an obligation as the most spiritual of our Church functions. Paying taxes is just as Christian as praying at a meeting. It is the duty of faith to see God in these relationships, and we must take care that the duties to the State are made part of our Christian conduct. And yet, as we have observed, in making conscience the ground of obedience the Apostle shows the true limit of civil submission (Acts v. 39, 40, 42).

3. How entirely independent of the moral character of the civil government is this fulfilment of our Duty to the State. The Jewish priesthood in our Lord's time was very corrupt, but He approved of the widow paying her Temple tax (Luke xxi. 2, 3). So also, our Lord Himself in His relations to the Roman government fully exemplified the teaching here given (Matt. xxii. 21 ; xxvi. 52 ; xxvii. 26, 27). In relation to the State, questions as to its precise moral character do not

## The Epistle to the Romans

Rom. xiii. touch our duty, so long as the demand does not trench on the domain of the conscience. Thus the Apostle has a far higher idea of the State than anything merely utilitarian. In spite of the fact that Christians were compelled to witness day by day the corruption which reigned in State affairs, the Apostle insists that the State is an essentially Divine and moral institution. We must therefore carefully distinguish between use and abuse, between the actual condition of the State at any given time and the idea of the State when viewed from the standpoint of God's will.

4. *How entirely satisfactory it would be to the Progress and Welfare of Christianity if such loyalty and submission were invariably practised.* If our duties as citizens were fully realised, it would constitute a splendid witness for God. In the State as well as in the Church we are called upon to "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

## VII

# DEBTS—PAID AND UNPAID

ROM. xiii. 8-10

8. Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

9. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if *there be* any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

10. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love *is* the fulfilling of the law.

THE Christian has relationships to the citizens of Rom. xiii. the State as well as to the State itself. The duty 8-10. of the believer to his fellow-citizens is here definitely inculcated.

I. Debt that can fully be Paid (ver. 8).—"Owe no man anything." The phrase, "no man," is evidently not the Christian brother, for that aspect of duty is considered in ch. xii., and is not here repeated. The term covers the entire field of our duties to our fellow-men. The "neighbour" is not a brother in Christ, but one who is bound to us by the ties of common humanity. The relation of the Christian to God is spiritual, not legal, but to the world it is legal rather

Debt that  
can fully be  
Paid.

## The Epistle to the Romans

Rom. xiii. 8-10. than spiritual, the spiritual being expressed in the legal.

A Negative  
Duty.

The negative duty emphasised is the avoidance of debt. "Owe no man anything." The Christian is not to incur anything which he is unable to pay, and knows that he is unable when it is incurred. He ought to be able to render back what is rightfully claimed from him. If he should have to borrow anything and the repayment is required, he ought to be able to meet his liability. How simple, and yet how searching is this requirement. Men judge Christians by their promptness in fulfilling obligations and in paying their bills, and it is a fine, natural, and legitimate test. A spirituality that is not ethical carries its own condemnation and is certain to elicit the disgust and opposition of all practical, honest people. A man who owed a Christian brother some money was once heard to pray in a meeting, "Lord, give us faith, give us devil-driving faith." The brother to whom the money was owing said to himself quietly, "Amen, Lord, and give us debt-paying faith." We have known of instances where teaching has been inculcated of a very spiritual nature by those who were notorious for not paying their tradesmen. As a result the fair name of Christianity was clouded and dragged in the mire. On the lowest ground it is a great satisfaction to feel that we have no pecuniary liability which we are unable to meet, for then we are free to give, not as a matter of duty, but as one of privilege and joy.

## Debts—Paid and Unpaid

And yet perhaps we are intended to go far wider afield and to consider our debts in the fullest possible sense. There are many other ways of fulfilling our obligations besides that of monetary repayment, and the more fully we realise our debt to others the richer will be our Christian life. When St Paul said, "I am debtor" (ch. i. 14), he was conscious of a debt of obligation as binding as any monetary responsibility could be. Christ had done so much for him that it was a simple duty to endeavour to repay something of his obligation. So also, when he said, "We are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh" (ch. viii. 12), he was conscious of the same spiritual pressure of obligation from another point of view, and felt it incumbent upon him to repay the debt by living to the Spirit and mortifying the deeds of the body.

Rom. xiii.  
8-10.  
The Wider  
Obligation.

II. *Debt that cannot be Paid* (vers. 8-10).—"Owe no man anything, but to love one another . . . love is the fulfilling of the law." The avoidance of debt is by no means the whole of our duty. Abstinence from wrong-doing is only part of the Christian attitude. Our life is to be rooted positively in love, and this constitutes a debt which we are always to pay and yet can never discharge in full. Our duty to the State, as we have seen, is virtually fulfilled by the avoidance of injury, but our duty to God goes much further and involves the active expression of love. We have already observed this love, as it affects our fellow-Christians (ch. xii. 10), and those who are hostile to us (ch. xii. 20). Here, however, it is inculcated in the widest

Debt that  
cannot be  
Paid.

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xiii. 8-10.** possible way. We must ever continue the positive duty of love; not merely "thou shalt not hurt," but "thou shalt help." Love is the foundation of justice, and the Second Table of the law is mentioned because the context refers to our neighbour, and therefore to justice to him. But justice is negative, not doing wrong; while love is the means of fulfilling justice. Every commandment of the Second Table is summed up in the positive word, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Our love to self is obviously positive and definite, and our love to our neighbour must be similar in character. Here again we find the echo of our Lord's own words (Matt. xxii. 39, 40), and especially of His parable of the Good Samaritan. This constitutes the heart of Christianity. We are to love because God is love, and because He first loved us. This is the Divine way of working.

Godet helpfully indicates the essential connection between the various parts of the long passage from ch. xii. 3-xiii. 10.

(a) In ch. xii. 3-18, our life is to be limited by humility.

(b) In ch. xii. 19-21, our life is to give itself in love.

(c) In ch. xiii. 1-7, our life is to be limited by submission.

(d) In ch. xiii. 8-10, our life is to give itself in love.

Suggestions  
for  
Meditation.

1. *Life by Rule and by Principle.* Living by rule and by principle finds in this passage a very striking illustration. There is all the difference in



## Debts—Paid and Unpaid

the world between these. We teach children to live by rule, a regulation for this and a regulation for that; so is it also with races and communities in their moral childhood. But Christianity is a religion of principle rather than of rule. A rule is a law for certain given circumstances and it mainly acts from without. A principle is a law for all circumstances, and is invariably applied from within. The rule is necessarily limited by the circumstances. The principle has no limit because it applies to all conditions.

### *2. Illustrations of life by Rule and by Principle.*

Let us observe the application of this distinction in some familiar ways. (a) In the matter of forgiveness, St Peter asked his Master whether he should forgive "until seven times" (Matt. xviii. 21). That was the suggestion of a rule; very simple, and so far, very easy, but after the seventh time there would be a difficulty if the offender came with his eighth appeal. So the Master laid down a principle, "Until seventy times seven." It is the spirit of forgiveness and no mere rule that will suffice. "Even as God in Christ forgave you" (Eph. iv. 32). (b) The question of neighbourliness. The Jew asked our Lord, "Who is my neighbour?" This was to make himself the pivot around which others were to turn. He looks round and asks, "Who"; but our Lord's reply reversed the order, and as Bishop Lightfoot points out, the true question is, "Who my neighbour is" that is, "What is he like?" We must find out all we can about him. There must be no picking and

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xiii.** choosing, but a full recognition of all as our  
**8-10.** neighbour. (c) The problem of giving. How much ought I to give? Is it to be one-tenth, or what? The New Testament lays down no rule, but emphasises the principle of giving, "as God hath prospered," and this, together with the corresponding principles, "as we have opportunity," and "as he hath purposed in his heart," shows what Christian giving really means.

Additional illustrations can be given of this distinction between rule and principle, as we think of such questions as the time required for religion, the way and times for realising the worship of God, the true methods of guidance, and the question of certain forms of amusement. Not one of these can be settled by rule. They must be decided by principle. It is exactly the same with the passage now before us. There is one principle which includes everything: the great, essential, fundamental principle of Love. Everything we say and do is to emanate from love, and nothing is to be excluded from its all-embracing power.

3. The power for life by Principle. Does some-one say that this is difficult? It is; because Christianity is for men, not for children. It emphasises character instead of mere conduct under given circumstances, and character is only possible by means of principle. But if difficult, it is not impracticable, because of God's gift of the Holy Spirit. He is the Spirit of Love, and if only He controls our life according to the Apostle's teaching in chapter viii. it will not be impossible to fulfil

## Debts—Paid and Unpaid

our obligations to the uttermost. “The love of Rom. xiii. the Spirit” is ours for this very purpose, and the 8-10. love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by that Spirit (ch. v. 5), in order that filled with love we may love as Christ loved, and live as He lived.

## VIII

# THE GREAT INCENTIVE

### ROM. xiii. 11-14

11. And that, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep : for now *is* our salvation nearer than when we believed.

12. The night is far spent, the day is at hand : let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

13. Let us walk honestly, as in the day ; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

14. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to *fulfil* the lusts *thereof*.

**Rom. xiii.** HERE comes the Christian enforcement of these duties. Some writers think that the verses are to be limited strictly to the preceding section, dealing with our duties to our fellow-citizens. Others suggest that they sum up the whole of the duties dealt with in chapters xii. and xiii., applying them in the light of the Second Coming. There is perhaps no real contrariety between these two views. The one thought is that everything is to be done in the light of the coming of our Lord.

**The Solemn  
Appeal.**

I. *The Solemn Appeal* (ver. 11).—"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to

## The Great Incentive

awake out of sleep." We may read this **Rom. xiii.**  
abbreviated phrase as follows: "And this (you are **II-14.**  
to do), knowing (as you do) the season (cf. 1 Cor.  
vii. 29; Eph. v. 16; 1 Thess. v. 1)." Their life was  
to be lived in the light of the great event of our  
Lord's coming (Heb. x. 25). This spiritual insight  
into the true reason and meaning of the time in  
which they lived is a point of great importance in  
Scripture. Our Lord rebuked His enemies for not  
knowing the signs of the times (Matt. xvi. 3), and  
one of the characteristic needs of Israel was that of  
men who had "understanding of the times"  
(1 Chron. xii. 32). Christians are called upon to  
observe carefully and scrutinise closely the spiritual  
aspects of the time in which they live, in order as  
far as possible to note the signs of God's presence  
and working.

This knowledge of the time was especially  
incumbent on them, because it was already the  
occasion for alertness ("high time to awake out  
of sleep"). "Sleep" suggests the thought of  
forgetfulness of God, while being awake implies  
spiritual readiness and shows responsibility. The  
words are addressed to Christians, and therefore  
apply, not to spiritual death, but to languor in the  
Christian life. "They all slumbered and slept"  
(Matt. xxv. 5).

**II. The Clear Explanation (ver. 11).** "For **The Clear**  
now is our salvation nearer than when we **Explanation.**  
believed." We have already observed that  
salvation in the New Testament is threefold: past,  
present, and future; and in this passage the third

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Rom. xiii. aspect alone is intended. The complete salvation which is to be ours in Christ (1 Pet. i. 5, 6) is nearer now than when we first commenced our Christian life. Observe the expression of salvation being nearer to us rather than of our being nearer to it. We see the meaning of this teaching in the next verse.

The Glorious  
Expectation.

III. The Glorious Expectation (ver. 12).—"The night is far spent, the day is at hand." The night of Christ's absence is nearly over and the day—dawn of His appearance is at hand. Our perfect salvation is to be brought when He appears, and in this lies the call to alertness and expectation. The contrast of night and day as expressive of the present life and the coming of our Lord is a favourite one with St Paul (Eph. v. 7-16; 1 Thess. v. 1-11). Christ's coming will indeed be "the day" in all its effulgence of brightness and glory.

The  
Practical  
Exhortation

IV. The Practical Exhortation (vers. 12, 13).—In a threefold way the Apostle exhorts to holiness of life. "Let us cast off"; "Let us put on"; "Let us walk." Everything characteristic of darkness is to be laid aside, and all that is appropriate to the day is to be put on. We are to walk "becomingly." The true life is to be one of "seemly behaviour" in the light of the great event. Sins of the flesh and sins of the mind will alike be set aside. We notice the six sins here mentioned. There are three classes of two each: (a) Intemperance (public sins); (b) impurity (private sins); (c) discord (personal and social sins). The climax of all these in "strife and jealousy" is



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especially significant. It is remarkable that licentiousness and envy should be put on the same level. God's classification of sins differs greatly from man's.

V. The Complete Provision (ver. 14).—The true secret of Christian living is stated, first positively and then negatively. The Complete Provision.

1. Positively; the Christian is to put on Christ as a garment. He is the soul's true clothing.

2. Negatively; no forethought is to be taken for the sinful nature. No preoccupation of mind with anything except with Christ. This is the Christian's twofold method of victory. He is not to fight in his own strength, but commit himself to Him Who has won the victory. The flesh is referred to as the seat of sin, as in earlier chapters, and no provision of any sort is to be made for it. We are to say "No" to the flesh on every occasion and occupy ourselves solely with the Lord Jesus Christ in the personal appropriation of faith.

This passage will always be memorable in connection with the conversion of St Augustine of Hippo. While he was in a garden one day he heard a voice, as from a neighbouring house, repeating frequently, "Take up and read." As he did so, he opened to this passage: "Not in rioting and drunkenness . . . But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." Then he adds, "I did not choose to read more, nor had I the occasion. Immediately, at the end of this sentence, as if a light of certainty had been poured into my heart, all the shadows of doubt were scattered." Archbishop Trench, re-

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**Rom. xiii. 11-14.** ferring to this conversion, remarks, "God's Word, if only we will suffer it to work in us, may be as potent now as ever it was of old, showing itself His power unto salvation by the same infallible proofs" (quoted by Neil, *Romans*, p. 434).

**Suggestions for Meditation.** There are two favourite expressions of the Apostle in this passage which call for special attention: the use of the word "clothe," or "put on," and the reference to "armour."

**The Soul's Attire.** 1. The Soul's Attire. This figure of "putting on" is frequently found in St. Paul. (a) We are to put on Christ (ch. xiii. 14). By an act of simple but all-embracing faith we are to accept and appropriate Him as our complete salvation for past, present, and future. Everything that He is and has done is intended for our use, and when we "put on" Christ we take Him from the beginning to the end of our Christian life for all that we need (*cf.* Gal. iii. 27). (b) We have "put on the new man" (Eph. iv. 24). This is no exhortation (see Greek), but the statement of a fact. When we accepted Jesus Christ as our own personal Saviour we there and then put off our "unregenerate self," everything we were in Adam, and at the same time we put on our regenerate self, the "new man" (Col. iii. 10), everything we are in Christ, and it is an essential part of the Christian life to realise this regeneration and live in its power. (c) We are to "put on" Christ-likeness (Col. iii. 12). The Christ Who died is the Christ Who lives, and the grace within us is to be expressed in holiness of character and

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conduct. (d) We are to "put on" the power of the Holy Spirit with which it is promised we shall be clothed (Luke xxiv. 49). All available grace is ours in the power of the Spirit. (e) We are to "put on" the Christian armour (ch. xiii. 12; Eph. vi. 11-14; 1 Thess. v. 8). Clothed in this provision no foe can possibly touch us. (f) We are to look forward to the time when we shall be "clothed with immortality" (1 Cor. xv. 53, 54; 2 Cor. v. 3). Thus from first to last God has made marvellous provision for what Godet calls "the toilet of the soul."

2. The Soul's Armour. This is another characteristic metaphor of St Paul and is a further assurance of God's complete provision for our needs. The idea is found in three different connections which suggest in turn the three foes of the Christian against which he needs protection. (a) There is "the armour of righteousness" (2 Cor. vi. 7). This seems to be the protection against the world. On the one hand, the world would tempt the believer to *despair* by asking what is the use of religion. At this point comes in "the armour of righteousness," because whatever the past may have been "the Lord our Righteousness" covers it all. On the other hand, the world may easily tempt the believer to *despise* and disregard uprightness by urging him to be content with a low standard and not to be so particular. Against this God provides "the armour of righteousness" for the present, since the Lord Jesus Christ is not only God's righteousness for our justification

The Soul's  
Armour.

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Rom. xiii. but also for our sanctification. No wonder, therefore, that the Apostle speaks of the armour of righteousness "on the right hand and on the left." From whatever quarter the enemy may come the provision is adequate. (*b*) There is "the armour of light" (ch. xiii. 12). This seems to be the protection against the flesh. All lower animals have a struggle for life, and so God gives many defences. Among these is that of colour. Insects which live in plants are mostly green. Grouse which live in the heather are mostly brown. Arctic animals which live in the North are mostly white. But the simplest protection is clear light; light protects by dazzling and baffling the foes. The little creatures in the sea which flash their light are thereby kept safe in the brightness. It is exactly the same in things spiritual. There is the light of *sincerity* which protects us against the deceits of the flesh; the light of *purity* which protects us against the defilements; the light of *love* which protects us against the delights; the light of *joy* which protects us against the despair. And when we put on this armour we find it altogether unnecessary to make any provision for the flesh, or to be preoccupied with it in any way whatsoever. (*c*) There is "the armour of God" (Eph. vi. 11). This seems to be the protection against the devil. His *works* (1 Tim. iii. 6, 7.) are overcome by the greater work of God, for "greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world"; and his *wiles* (Eph. vi. 11) are overcome by the wisdom of God, so that when Christ

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is made unto us wisdom we are able to say of **Rom. xiii.** the devil, "we are not ignorant of his devices." **11-14.**

And thus our three enemies are more than met by this threefold armour provided in Christ. Let us therefore appropriate Him and put Him between ourselves and our foes. Let there be but contact of the soul with Christ, committal of the soul to Christ, and control of the soul by Christ, and there will be safety to self, victory over foes, and glory to God.

## IX

# STRONG AND WEAK BRETHREN

ROM. xiv. 1-12

1. Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, *but* not to doubtful disputations.

2. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.

3. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

4. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

5. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day *alike*. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

6. He that regardeth the day, regardeth *it* unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard *it*. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

7. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

8. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

9. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

10. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou



## Strong and Weak Brethren

set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

11. For it is written, *As I live*, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.

12. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

THE Christian love of chaps. xii. and xiii. is now **Rom. xiv. I-12.** to be applied to a special case (*cf.* ch. xii. 3, 10 with ch. xiv. 19). The R.V. rightly inserts the word "but" at the beginning which has curiously been left out of the A.V. This enables us to consider and, if possible, discover the true connection between the present and the preceding sections. Bishop Moule thinks that it may be found in the thought of the alert Christian of ch. xiii. 11-13, finding some weak brother, and being tempted to protest against or despise him as a trouble and a hindrance. **The Weak and the Strong.** Then the present chapter would suggest the opportunity for the strong brother to show Christian considerateness, while the weak one also is not to think the strong brother self-indulgent or careless because he happens to use his liberty in Christ. Another suggestion of the connection between the sections is in the association of subordination as a citizen with toleration as a Christian, each being adduced as an example of the Christian consecration inculcated in chap. xii. 1, 2. Christianity thus holds a perfect balance between the highest devotion and the lowest duty.

Hitherto the Apostle has been speaking to his readers as believers in Christ who are in the

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Rom. xiv. enjoyment of full liberty, and are divinely equipped  
I-12. for all righteousness. He has taken for granted the normal and free vigour of the true life of faith, but experience has shown him that this fulness of liberty was not properly understood, appropriated, and enjoyed by all believers. Side by side with those who were experiencing liberty in Christ were others who were weak in faith and troubled by scruples about things which were in themselves without moral significance.

Causes of  
Dissension.

Circumstances had thus arisen which troubled the Christians and were causing dissension, and so it becomes necessary for St Paul to inculcate the spirit of Christian love by means of mutual forbearance in things indifferent. It was very difficult for a Jewish Christian to rid himself at once of all ideas of differences between days and between foods. Indeed, conscience about diet and observances seems almost inherent in human nature. A Gentile Christian, on the other hand, having entirely given up his old religious system as idolatrous would not usually be troubled by such scruples, but the Jewish converts often could not quite make up their minds to abandon the private observance of rules such as those to which they had been formerly accustomed. They therefore judged other Christians harshly for not observing rules, while they themselves in turn were despised for their scrupulosity.

A Local  
Difference  
Only.

The question does not seem to have been so serious in Rome as in other Churches (1 Cor. viii. 8),

## Strong and Weak Brethren

nor was it connected with the great controversy on Justification, as in Galatia (*cf.* Gal. ii. 12-21). Rom. xiv. 1-12.

It was simply a matter of local difference of conscience between Christians; mainly, as it would seem, though not exclusively, between Gentile and Jewish believers. It has been suggested that the trouble was due to the idea of the superiority of vegetarianism over flesh diet (Gen. i. 29; ix. 3), and if so, no Christian principle was involved. It was a matter for mutual consideration on both sides. Godet thinks these differences probably broke out at Love Feasts, and gave occasion to sad expressions of disharmony between believers at these solemn and, as they should have been, happy times.

The subject covers ch. xiv. 1-xv. 13, and is treated thus:

(a) Ch. xiv. 1-12: Some general principles and rebukes to both sides.

(b) Ch. xiv. 13-23: Exhortations mainly to the strong.

(c) Ch. xv. 1-13: The subject considered and widened in the light of our Lord's example.

I. The Call to the Strong (ver. 1).—The man who is weak in his Christian confidence as to the extent of his liberty in matters of eating and drinking is to be welcomed cordially to Christian fellowship. "Him that is weak in faith receive ye." The last clause of the verse is differently interpreted. In the A.V. and English R.V. we read, "But not to doubtful disputations." In the American R.V. it is, "Yet not for decision of scruples." Weymouth renders it, "But not for the purpose of deciding

The Call to the Strong.

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**Rom. xiv. 1-12.** mere matters of opinion." Rutherford in his able version translates the entire verse thus: "Although in his faith a man shows weakness, I bid you welcome him to your society without desiring to contest his opinions." Strong Christians are not to sit in judgment on the scruples of their weak brethren, but to show a spirit of toleration and sympathy. Difficulties are not to be discussed, doubts are not to be discriminated, still less is judgment to be passed. The brother is to be welcomed cordially into fellowship and loved rather than argued out of his difficulties. Sanday thinks that the meaning is, "Not to pass judgment on his thoughts," while Gifford says, "Not to discuss his doubts." Garvie writes, "They are not to be made to feel that the community tolerates them but condemns their scruples." Godet suggests that the fundamental idea is against getting into any debate which would only end in vain reasonings.

The weakness of faith here mentioned refers, not to any essential or inherent defect of character, but simply to the lack of true spiritual breadth and real moral perception. Faith in Christ saves us from sin, but it does not at once and always enable us to see the application of this salvation to the small matters of daily life. "Grace sanctifies the heart much more easily than the head." It has been aptly said that God washes hearts in this life, but He washes brains in the life to come.

The First  
Difference  
and its  
Adjustment.

II. The First Difference and its Adjustment  
(vers. 2-4).—One kind of question referred to in the preceding verse had to do with eating. One man

## Strong and Weak Brethren

had confidence that there was no essential difference **Rom. xiv. 1-12.** between foods; another, lacking this perception, hesitated, and so limited himself to herbs as the only safe way of avoiding moral pollution (ver. 2). This was the problem, and we shall see how it was to be faced by both parties. The strong is not to despise the weak; the weak is not to be censorious against the strong. Since God has received the strong brother, why should not the weak one welcome him to fellowship? If God has received him into fellowship it is clearly a case which is not to be despised, especially as God's reception means that he is to be dealt with at a Divine and not a human tribunal of judgment (ver. 3). Then follows a severe rebuke to the weak for judging the strong. He is the servant of another, and hence there must and can be no intrusion into the household affairs of another party (ver. 4). "To his own master he stands or falls," and although the Apostle has made use of the word "fall," he goes on to say that the strong brother will not fall because God's mighty power will keep him upright. It would seem best to make this assurance (that God is able to make the strong brother stand) refer to his moral and spiritual position in the present life, though there are interpreters who think the reference is either to Church status as the good standing of Church membership, or the Jewish status of acceptance in the last day (See Neil, *Romans*, p. 440).

III. The Second Difference and its Adjustment **The Second Difference and its Adjustment.**  
(ver. 5).—Another question was the observance of days. Perhaps the reference was to the permanent



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**Rom. xiv. 1-12.** binding character of Jewish feasts, though Sanday and Headlam think that it is impossible to distinguish between Jewish rites which are condemned and Christian rites which are enjoyed. On this subject the great rule for all parties was full persuasion of mind or moral conscience. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." Let there be such a fulness of conviction that no room will be left for the least hesitation.

**The Right  
Standpoint.**

IV. The Right Standpoint (ver. 6).—The true attitude as to days and foods is found in the words "to the Lord." Everything was to be done or left undone in the light of this great thought. This is the reason why both lines may be followed, by the strong and the weak respectively. He who has any feeling on the matter gives it careful thought and practises it in relation to his Master, just as in the same way he who refrains does so in the same spirit of loyalty to his Master, since he too has fellowship with God concerning it.

**Observance  
of Sunday.**

A word seems necessary here about the Christian observance of Sunday. It is sometimes thought that the regular observance of one day in seven is altogether incompatible with Christian spirituality and liberty as here inculcated by the Apostle. But, as Godet points out, the context does not warrant us in coming to this conclusion. There is no doubt that even the observance of Sunday can be undertaken in a spirit of anxious scrupulosity which is utterly opposed to Christian liberty, and if a believer observes the day in this spirit he



## Strong and Weak Brethren

will inevitably come under the bondage here **Rom. xiv. I-12.** deprecated. But when we fully realise the true spirit of the observance of that day as based upon our physical nature, promulgated from creation, and constituting one of the essential features of true religion, we observe it as "under law to Christ," without the faintest possibility of any spiritual bondage detrimental to the Christian soul (see Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, p. 387).

Another question of supreme moment seems to be settled by this teaching of the Apostle. The young believer is often puzzled by certain practical questions of daily life. May I do this? May I go there? May I read that? The answer is clear in the light of this principle: "Yes, if I can enjoy it to the Lord, and while giving Him thanks for it; No, if I cannot receive it as a gift from His hand and bless Him for it" (Godet, *Romans*, p. 334).

V. The Fundamental Reason (vers. 7-9).—The great principle in all these matters is "Not I, but Christ." We are all related to one another in Him, and the questions now discussed are only special examples of what is true of the entire Christian life (vers. 7, 8). Our relation to Christ is based on His death and resurrection, and this means His Lordship. Indeed, the Lordship of Christ over the lives of His people was the very purpose for which He died and rose again (ver. 9). **The Fundamental Reason.**

VI. The General Reproof (vers. 10-12).—The two parties are again rebuked. Why should the weak judge censoriously the liberal-minded? Why **The General Reproof.**

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**Rom. xiv.** should the strong brother despise the scrupulous?  
**1-12.** We are to stand before God's judgment, not the judgment of one another. Our relation to Christ is incompatible with any similar relation to man. Earthly Christians are not our lords, neither are we theirs, and although Christians are to judge angels (1 Cor. vi. 3), that time is not yet come. This teaching about judgment is confirmed from Scripture (Isa. xlv. 23), and the practical conclusion is that each one of us is to give an account to God (ver. 12). "The preceding context (ver. 10) signified: Judge not thy brother, for God will judge him; this verse signifies: Judge thyself, for God will judge thee" (Godet, *Romans*, p. 338). Hence the true attitude is holy fear. The strong will fear to grieve the weak, and the weak to judge the strong, and in both cases it will be because of their relation to Christ.

This reference to judgment needs careful distinction in the light of other passages of the New Testament. In John v. 24 we read of judgment on sins as past in the case of the believer, but in the present passage, and in 2 Cor. v. 10, the reference is to Christ's tribunal for the faithfulness of His own disciples, who will there receive as Christians the reward of grace according to their works.

Suggestions  
for  
Meditation.

The great principle laid down throughout this section is the Lordship of Christ. "That He might be Lord." This is true, not only of the subjects here mentioned, but also of the whole of the believer's life.

## Strong and Weak Brethren

1. For Pardon. We have to acknowledge **Rom. xiv.** Christ as our Lord. Sin is rebellion, and it is only **I-12.** as we surrender to Him as our Lord that we receive pardon from Him as our Saviour.

2. For Peace. We have to accept Him as our Lord. He is the Lord of peace (2 Thes. iii. 16). It is first, government, and then, peace (Isa. ix. 7).

3. For Holiness. We have to admit Him to reign on the throne of the heart, and it is only when He is glorified in our hearts as King that the Holy Spirit enters and abides (John vii. 39).

4. For Victory. We have to appropriate Him as Conqueror of Satan, sin, circumstances, and self.

5. For Fellowship. We have to allow Him to be the Lord of our Christian assemblies. It often happens that earnest souls are thrown into contact with uncongenial fellow-Christians, and it is difficult for the strong uncompromising believer not to be hindered and hampered. The one secret of power and blessing is the recognition of the Lordship of Christ. He is our Lord, He is their Lord, and the most profitable Church for the development of Christian character is often the Church which is characterised by trying surroundings.

It is the Lordship of Christ which will enable us to tolerate differences so long as they do not involve disobedience to the Word of God, or denial of some fundamental principle of the Gospel. In the latter case, as we can see from St Paul himself, we must not give place, even for an hour (Gal. ii.). But this apart, the realisation of the Lordship of Christ

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xiv.** will enable us to become large-hearted Christians, **I-12.** emphasising unity in things essential and liberty in things non-essential. Loyalty to Christ will inevitably bring about freedom from anxiety as to any choice made by self, or any misunderstanding between fellow-Christians. Fellowship must not be broken for trifles, since we have no right to insist on such slight conditions of communion; indeed, the fear of breaking the bonds of fellowship between those who are under the Lordship of Christ ought to act as one of the strongest deterrents. When the strong brother realises how dear the weak one is to our Father in Heaven, how can he despise him? And if the weak brother only recalls the common attitude of accountability to their one Lord and Master, how quickly he will shrink from all censorious judgment. Thus loyalty to the Lord will ever keep us from occupying the Master's judgment seat.

And so for everything the secret is found in the Lordship of Christ. "He is thy Lord" (Psa. xlv. 11). "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth" (1 Sam. iii. 9). "My Lord and my God" (John xx. 28).

## X

# HIGH DOCTRINES FOR HUMBLE DUTIES

ROM. xiv. 13-23

13. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in *his* brother's way.

14. I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that *there is* nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him *it is* unclean.

15. But if thy brother be grieved with *thy* meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.

16. Let not then your good be evil spoken of:

17. For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

18. For he that in these things serveth Christ *is* acceptable to God, and approved of men.

19. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

20. For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed *are* pure; but *it is* evil for that man who eateth with offence.

21. *It is* good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor *any thing* whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

22. Hast thou faith? have *it* to thyself before God. Happy *is* he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.

23. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because *he eateth* not of faith: for whatsoever *is* not of faith is sin.

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**Rom. xiv.** THE Apostle has been laying down the general principles with reference to our responsibility to the law in connection with difficult circumstances. **13-23.** Now he will speak of the right and true use of Christian liberty. He has shown that all such matters as foods and days are in themselves indifferent; but he proceeds at the same time to emphasise the great principles associated with Christian love. He addresses himself mainly to the strong, untrammelled, vigorous Christian, though indirectly, and in passing, the weak, hesitating, scrupulous brother is not overlooked. The main thoughts of the section seem to be as follows: (a) vers. 13-19: Do not grieve the weak brother; (b) vers. 19-23: Do not destroy God's work in Him. Let us give careful attention to the high principles here inculcated for the observance of lowly practices.

An Earnest  
Exhortation.

I. An Earnest Exhortation (ver. 13).—Because of the judgment of God before which we shall all have to stand (ver. 12), “let us not therefore judge one another any more.” Judgment is God's work, not ours. If we must judge at all, let us decide on this, that we will not be the cause of stumbling to any Christian brother. We may fully give the powers of our mind to this form of judgment, but to no other. It is a primary duty to avoid anything which will cause a shock, and, still more, a fall.

A Strong  
Assertion.

II. A Strong Assertion (ver. 14).—In the clearest, most definite, and even most solemn way, as expressed by the opening words, “I know, and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus,” St Paul states that distinctions of foods are groundless, and yet that



## High Doctrines for Humble Duties

every Christian has not realised this truth. Indeed, **Rom. xiv. 13-23.** this exception is the argument of the present section in which he appeals to the strong. It is just because all Christians cannot take this high ground that the Apostle has to speak as he does (1 Cor. x. 26; 1 Tim. iv. 3-5; Tit. i. 15). It is a fine testimony to St Paul's clearness of sight, and at the same time to his Christian love, that he is able to write in this way.

III. A Loving Entreaty (vers. 15, 16).—The strong Christian who has come to the conclusion that nothing is unclean of itself must be careful to respect the scruples of the one who has not yet learned the lesson, for fear he should hurt the spiritual health of his brother. Our brother's weakness is the measure of our duty. For a trifling bit of food we must not grieve a brother in Christ and perhaps lead him astray (1 Cor. viii. 7-13; x. 23-33). As Dr David Brown helpfully says, "The wilful violation of conscience contains within itself a seed of destruction."

A Loving  
Entreaty.

Liberty is given, but it must not degenerate into licence. Wrangling and differences between Christian men will cause the enemy to blaspheme. We must therefore give special care lest our good be evil spoken of. This "good" may be that Christian liberty which the strong enjoy, or it may refer to the Christian cause, which is thereby reproached through our lack of true consideration. Both ideas may be included, for we all know how definite and practical a bearing individual conduct has on the general interests of Christianity. Our

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**Rom. xiv. 13-23.** stronger faith and wider liberty must be held in check and not given full play, lest we hurt and trouble others both in the Church and outside.

**A True Attitude.**

IV. A True Attitude (vers. 17, 18).—That all this action is necessary is shown by the fact that the essence of Christianity is no matter of food and drink. The Kingdom of God is occupied with far greater matters than the mere questions of eating and drinking. Christianity is internal, not external, and its main principles are righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. The “righteousness” of love which is moral uprightness; the “peace” of fellowship which is union and communion among Christians; the “joy” in the Holy Spirit which involves genuine exaltation in the Christian community—these are the essential realities of the Gospel, and when this is clearly understood it becomes utterly impossible to dwell on any smaller matters. This is the true attitude of the genuine man of God, and the life thus lived with constant regard to helpfulness to our fellow-Christians will have the twofold effect of being acceptable to God and approved of men (ver. 18). Such a life will stand the supreme test of Divine examination, and will be seen to be well-pleasing to the Father, and to possess the approbation of those around.

**An Urgent Necessity.**

V. An Urgent Necessity (vers. 19, 20).—All this points clearly to the duty of both strong and weak to pursue the things that make for peace and mutual edification. They must not merely live so as to avoid irritation, but, much more, they must so live as not to do any harm to the work of God's

## High Doctrines for Humble Duties

grace already experienced in a brother's heart. **Rom. xiv. 13-23.** "Peace" and "edification" are thus the two aspects, negative and positive, of every genuine life. For a mere piece of food no one must destroy the work of God's grace in a human soul (ver. 20). Mark the striking contrast between "meat" and "God." In verse 13 the appeal is made with reference to personal pain and trouble, but here the Apostle goes much further and urges it in the light of God's work. The strong must not give any occasion to another to stumble. The issues of life are profoundly solemn, and it is essential to live the true life in Christ moment by moment. While everything is pure in itself it becomes base to the man whose conscience is stumbled by eating it (ver. 20).

**VI. A Simple Privilege (ver. 21).**—Now comes **A Simple Privilege.** a thought which covers and summarises the whole subject. It is a "beautiful" thing not to eat, or drink, or do anything which causes a brother to stumble (1 Cor. vii. 1; viii. 13). Nothing could well be finer than this statement of what ought to be regarded as the high joy and true satisfaction of a Christian brother who is willing to avoid even the most harmless things as he regards them for the sake of a weak brother. If God puts such a privilege before us we ought to rejoice in the possibility of doing such a "beautiful" thing.

**VII. A Closing Reminder (vers. 22, 23).**—In **A Closing Reminder.** two successive verses the Apostle makes a virtual appeal, first to the strong and then to the weak brother. To the strong this is what he has to say

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xiv.** (ver. 22): If you have faith that these things are  
**13-23.** pure matters of indifference, keep that faith to yourself; do not parade it in public and shock your weak brother. At the same time be quite sure that in this attitude of liberty you are not condemning yourself and going beyond your own conscience. Happy is he who has no misgivings in that of which he approves; happy is the man whose practice does not go beyond his convictions. This is a motive for restraint; the strong brother is to be content with the absence of scruples, and is to avoid the use of liberty for the sake of another who cannot see as far as he can. This appeal to the strong to cherish and enjoy his faith alone with God is a reminder that he can well afford to be generous to his weak brother. The quiet, yet searching word with which the verse closes is particularly significant. That man is happy who feels no scruples or points of conscience in what he has determined to do.

Now he turns to the weak brother, and this is his message to him (ver. 23): Here is your danger; if you have any doubt or hesitation about a matter of food, you are thereby self-condemned. If you cannot exercise faith about it, you must by all means leave it alone. Whenever you are in doubt, give Christ the benefit of the doubt, and if you cannot do a thing as Christ's follower, do not do it at all.

The Apostle's words, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin," are apt to be misunderstood and misused. We must be careful to apply them to

## High Doctrines for Humble Duties

the point at issue. Stiller's words are very pertinent:—

Rom. xiv.  
13-23.

"It must be carefully noted that Paul is not speaking here of absence of saving faith, but of defect in it. Hence this is not a general but a Christian principle. Paul is prescribing for what is before him in the Church and not for mankind" (*The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 248).

This question of the relation of the strong to the weak brother is one of great, pressing, and constant importance in the Christian life. The weak and the strong are still with us, and if we would maintain that Christian fellowship which is of the very essence of true life we must constantly learn how the weak is to regard the strong, and, even more, how the strong is to regard the weak. There is a great possibility of hurting our fellow-Christians by actions lawful in themselves, and by insisting on rights which God has undoubtedly given to us. We are therefore bound to consider others and the effect of our actions on them. The position is rendered all the more difficult from time to time by the fact that the same action may do harm to some and good to others. St Paul had directly in mind the unwisdom and danger of doing something that another thinks is wrong, and thereby of tempting him to do it, and thus making him doubt as well the other man's right intention. There is also, however, the possibility of approaching someone who is engaged on that about which he has no scruple and which is for him wholly innocent, and perhaps making him

Suggestions  
for  
Meditation.

Consideration of  
Others



## The Epistle to the Romans

Rom. xiv. think that it is wrong and thereby bringing him into condemnation. In the latter case the man is stumbled, because he is still tempted to go on doing what he did before, though the question has now been raised in his mind as to its lawfulness.

Two Duties. Thus there are two corresponding duties: first, that of a reasonable concern for the conscience of other men by avoiding the doing of what they would regard as wrong, even though we ourselves do not regard it so; second, the duty of doing our utmost to cultivate a discerning and discriminating conscience in the other person, and thereby training him to think for himself and to distinguish between things that differ. We have then to balance results and consider on which side, on the whole, the scale of our influence will fall. We shall be helped by a careful consideration of the principles insisted upon by the Apostle all through this chapter.

### Four Principles.

1. The Christian Life must be lived in the Light of the Lordship of Christ (ver. 8). We have already dwelt on this, and only recall it here for the purpose of associating it with the other principles found in the chapter. "Lord, what wilt Thou?" is the test of all problems.

2. The Christian Life should be lived in the Light of the Judgment (vers. 10, 12). It is a great help to true life in the present when it is viewed in its proper perspective. We must continually ask ourselves how such an attitude, or such an action will look in the light of eternity.

3. The Christian Life should be lived in the



## High Doctrines for Humble Duties

Light of Love (ver. 15). If only we take care to **Rom. xiv.** walk "charitably," or "according to love" we **13-23.** shall soon find that our brother's interest will take a foremost place in our thought, and the fact that we love him will do as much as anything to prevent us from violating his conscience.

4. The Christian Life should be lived in the Light of Calvary (ver. 15). This is the supreme motive. The weak brother is one for whom Christ shed His blood and in whom the work of God's grace in Christ has already been commenced (ver. 20). If, therefore, we keep ever in view the marvel of God's mercy in the gift of His dear Son, it will do more than anything else to preserve our souls in the same attitude of loving regard, unselfish consideration, and willing self-sacrifice.

As we contemplate these profound principles and the fact that they are brought to bear upon the simplest and most ordinary practices of daily life, we have a fresh illumination of the greatness and glory of the Apostle to the Gentiles.

## XI

# THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

### ROM. xv. 1-7

1. We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

2. Let every one of us please *his* neighbour for *his* good to edification.

3. For even Christ pleased not himself ; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.

4. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

5. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus :

6. That ye may with one mind *and* one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.

**Rom. xv.  
1-7.**

**The  
Relationship  
of the Strong  
and the  
Weak.**

THIS section is closely connected with the foregoing subject, and, indeed, forms its conclusion. It is concerned with pressing home the true relation between the strong and the weak Christian. From the special discussion, however, of the former chapter, St Paul passes to the general considerations underlying all such questions, and he appeals to his readers to honour them heartily in their life. We shall also see as we proceed to verses 8-13 that the Apostle has in view something still more

## The Imitation of Christ

important than even these relations between the weak and the strong. He is concerned for the promotion of that joyous and trustful harmony with which the entire Church should be waiting the full consummation of all its marvellous hopes in Christ. Rom. xv. 1-7.

I. Obligation (ver. 1).—“We, the strong ones, ought to keep on bearing the weaknesses of the powerless ones, and not to be wanting continually to please ourselves.” We observe the emphatic way in which the Apostle associates himself with them. Christians are to bear, not merely to forbear; there must be patient submission and the endeavour to support the weakness of our brother by loving forethought and tenderness. This regard for the weak is particularly characteristic of the strong Apostle of the Gentiles (Gal. vi. 1, 2). Obligation.

The keynote of the verse is in the word “ought,” implying the consciousness of a profound obligation. Even the etymology of “we ought” is suggestive. It always means, “we owe it.” There are many weaknesses arising from prejudices, faults, and errors, and they inevitably and invariably come from weakness of faith. For the carrying of burdens love is the great power. A little girl was once carrying a baby, and someone asked, “Is he not heavy?” “No,” was the reply, “he is my brother.”

II. Edification (ver. 2).—The aim of each and every individual Christian should be to please his neighbour for good, with a view to building him up in the Christian faith and life. This is the supreme Edification.

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xv. 1-7.** law of brotherhood, and the Apostle practised what he preached (1 Cor. ix. 19-22 ; x. 32, 33).

**Imitation.** III. Imitation (ver. 3).—"For Christ also pleased not Himself." The Master did the very same thing as the Apostle here urges his fellow-Christians to do. This is the first reference to the example of Christ in the Epistle. The lack of prominence is doubtless due to the fact that the Epistle as a whole is mainly concerned with the Person and Work of our Lord. All references to the example of Christ should be carefully collected and studied. They will be found closely associated with that redeeming grace of God by which alone any true "imitation of Christ" becomes possible (John xiii. 34 ; xv. 2 ; 2 Cor. v. 13-16 ; Phil. ii. 4-8 ; 1 Pet. ii. 21-25 ; 1 John iv. 10, 11).

**Confirmation.** IV. Confirmation (ver. 3).—"As it is written, the reproach of them that reproached thee fell on me." The Scripture foretold the action of the Messiah in this very respect (Psa. lxi. 9). It is striking to observe that there are more references to Psa. lxi. in the New Testament in relation to Christ than to any other, and this would seem to show that in many respects the Psalm is intended to express Messianic experiences.

**Inspiration.** V. Inspiration (ver. 4).—The reason for quoting the Old Testament is now seen to be in the purpose of that book as a whole. It was written to uphold believers in their life of patient hope. They were to learn, and from learning to derive endurance and comfort, which in turn would lead to hope.

**Supplication.** VI. Supplication (vers. 5, 6).—From the

## The Imitation of Christ

Scriptures the Apostle turns to God Himself as the **Rom. xv. 1-7.** Source of endurance and comfort. Wherever the Greek word here rendered "patience" is found we are to understand active endurance, not passive resignation. It suggests the presence, not the absence of difficulty, and the attitude of determined, deliberate steadfastness under pressure.

"The use of the word *endurance*, which always implies difficulty, to describe our treatment of weaker brethren, and the example of Christ under raillery of the enemies of God, reminds us how difficult it sometimes is to act towards weaker brethren in a spirit of love. Our Christian character is seldom so severely tried as when we are put to inconvenience by the spiritual childishness of members of the Church" (Beet, *St Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, p. 344).

This grace comes from God through the Scriptures, and will in turn bring us and our fellow-Christians into unity, Christ being the standard: "according to Christ Jesus." Oneness with God will lead to oneness among brethren. When God is first the result will be unity. Not identity of union but harmony of feeling. It is to be observed that of the two unities emphasised by the Apostle in Ephesians iv., one is present and the other is future: "the unity of the Spirit" (ver. 3) we are to keep with all possible endeavour; but "the unity of faith and knowledge" (ver. 13) will not come yet, but will be reached some day (*cf.* Phil. iii. 15-17; iv. 2, 3). And the ultimate object which is in the mind of the Apostle as he prays is that unitedly and in harmony they may all

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xv. 1-7.** glorify God in Christ (ver. 6). This was the supreme purpose of the Apostle, the union of the entire Church. For this he had been praying, and striving, and teaching many years.

**Application.** VII. Application (ver. 7).—Now comes the closing exhortation and appeal to both parties. Each is to acknowledge and treat the other as Christians. They are to welcome one another (see the same word in commencing the subject, ch. xiv. 1), as Christ had welcomed them all without exception, to the glory of God. Both are to do their utmost to bring about this result. If Christ has received a brother, I must receive him too. And yet Christ's reception of us does not destroy differences even while it prevents disunion. Amid harmony there is variety, and there is no reason why with many differences among Christians essential unity may not exist.

**Suggestions for Meditation.** As we contemplate the various principles and ideals set before us by the Apostle in this entire section (ch. xiv. 1-xv. 7) the thought naturally arises, "How can these things be?" It is in some ways the supreme question of a believer's life, the possibility of realising ideals and fulfilling the obvious Divine purpose. We frequently hear of Emerson's counsel, "Hitch your wagon to a star," but the problem is how to connect our wagon with the star in the sky. It is this point that the Apostle very specially brings before us in the present passage. After insisting upon great, powerful, and essential principles he reveals a threefold secret to enable us to fulfil them.



## The Imitation of Christ

1. The Pattern of Christ's Example. Twice in Rom. xv. this brief passage is this truth taught. In His earthly life our Lord did not please Himself (ver. 3), and we are to "follow His steps." In His heavenly life our Lord is the standard of Christian living, for we are to be of one mind, "according to Christ Jesus" (ver. 5). In like manner, St John's First Epistle lays great stress on Christ as our pattern. No less than six times he uses the phrase, "even as He." We are to "walk in the light, as He is in the light" (ch. i. 7). We are to "walk, even as He walked" (ch. ii. 6). We are to "purify ourselves, even as He is pure" (ch. iii. 3). And we are to "love, as He gave us commandment" (ch. iii. 23). But it is the special and unique feature of the New Testament treatment of the example of Christ that it is never far away from the thought of Christ as the Source of grace and power. He is not only, or even chiefly, our Example; He is our Redeemer, and as Saviour He provides the grace that enables us to imitate Him. When St Peter speaks of Christ "leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps" (1 Pet. ii. 21), he quickly refers to our Lord as the Sin-Bearer, as the Life, and as the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls (vers. 24, 25). Thus the example of Christ, so far from causing us despondency and despair by reason of our inability to realise it, is brought closely home to our daily needs by the assurance of grace sufficient.

2. The Power of Holy Scripture. Herein is another secret of power in the Christian life.

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xv. 1-7.** Whatever grace is needed is found in Holy Scripture. It was intended for this very purpose, and it always accomplishes its end when properly used. It contains truth because it is a Divine revelation. It assures us of God's pardon as our consolation, God's presence as our cheer, God's power as our confidence. It reveals His will as our rule, His grace as our provision, and in its record of the life of God's people it shows that what has been done can be done again. Its promises elicit our faith, its experiences sustain us in difficulties. It is ever pointing onward to "that blessed hope," and this provides an "anchor" which keeps us from drifting (Heb. vi. 19), and an "helmet" which shields us from danger (1 Thess. v. 8). The more thoroughly, therefore, we become intellectually and spiritually acquainted with the Bible as the Word of God, the more deeply will it affect our character and transform our life. There is nothing in Christianity so potent for Christian living as a daily, definite, first-hand meditation of the Word of God. It is as impossible to exaggerate its power, as it is impossible to over-estimate the loss that accrues when our Christian life is not supported, sustained, and guided day by day by this close contact with Holy Scripture.

—The  
Provision.

3. The Provision of Prayer. As the Apostle turns from Scripture to the Source of Scripture, so we in our daily life must resolve everything into prayer. Prayer means power, because it links us to the Fount of power, God Himself. Scripture and prayer are frequently associated in the New

## The Imitation of Christ

Testament, because in the one God speaks to us, **Rom. xv.** and in the other we speak to God. With the **1-7.** channels of the spiritual life thus open at both ends and clear all the way through, we receive grace for daily living from "the God of all grace," and find ourselves enabled to fulfil the will of God, and live lives well-pleasing to Him.

## XII

# CHRISTIAN BROTHERHOOD

### ROM. xv. 8-13

8. Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises *made* unto the fathers :

9. And that the Gentiles might glorify God for *his* mercy ; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.

10. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.

11. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles ; and laud him, all ye people.

12. And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles ; in him shall the Gentiles trust.

13. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

Rom. xv.  
8-13.

Differences  
and Respon-  
sibilities.

At this stage we have a striking instance of the way in which the Apostle leads on from an ordinary subject into something deep and fundamental connected with it. We shall appreciate this thought if we review the preceding verses and observe how the transition is made. From the special case of the weak and the strong brethren in the Church at Rome he passes to the more general subject of the two classes, Jew and Gentile, in the Christian

## Christian Brotherhood

Church, and the need of union and fellowship in **Rom. xv.** spite of all differences. First he pleads for mutual **8-13.** consideration by the example of Christ (vers. 1-3); then he depicts the union to be reached thereby (vers. 4-7); and from this he proceeds to indicate the special part attributed respectively to Jew and Gentile in this fellowship (vers. 8-13). And thus our present section is the explanatory proof of ver. 7, showing that Christ had received both Jews and Gentiles, and that therefore we as Christians should do likewise one with another. No conscientious differences are to be expressed in the form of sectionalism among Christians; for if God has vanquished that most notable of sectional differences, the one between Jew and Gentile, much more may His children follow His example and refuse to allow differences among themselves to pass into severances. This question of Jew and Gentile thus comes up once again, though it had necessarily been dropped since chapter xi. 32. The Apostle opens with his customary phrase of explanation, "Now I say," that is, "What I mean, is this." And then while the words, "meat," "weak," and "strong," are not again used, but the two nationalities are considered instead, it would almost seem that the Jew must have been the weak brother and the Gentile the strong, though there were pretty certainly exceptions in both cases.

The Divine Plan (ver. 8).—"Jesus Christ The Divine Plan. was a minister of the circumcision." This is a simple statement, and is only found here. It refers

## The Epistle to the Romans

Rom. xv. 8-13. to the well-known fact that during our Lord's earthly ministry His work was restricted to the Jews. As He told the Canaanitish woman, He was only sent "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." It was merely in very indirect ways that He came in contact with Gentiles, and it is quite a question whether even the Greeks who wished to see Him had their desire fulfilled (John xii. 21). At any rate there is no record of the fact, and the probabilities seem against it in the light of our Lord's definite attitude during His earthly life. It would have been premature, and even fatal, to have ministered to the Gentiles before offering the Gospel to Israel and making sure of the covenant people. At first sight this restriction of Christ's ministry to Israel is perplexing, and yet the more it is considered the more clearly the Divine plan becomes evident. It is often necessary to do less first in order to do more afterwards, and by concentrating His work on Israel, as the first Gospel indicates, it became possible for Him gradually to develop His purpose, until at length it reached "all nations."

The Definite Purpose.

II. The Definite Purpose (vers. 8, 9).—This concentration of Christ's ministry on the Jews was "for the truth of God," and had in view two distinct yet connected ideas. (a) First, "that He might confirm the promises given unto the fathers"; (b) Second, that "the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy." In relation to the Jews it was necessary that God's truth should be manifested in faithfulness to His promises. In relation to the



## Christian Brotherhood

Gentiles it was essential to reveal His mercy, since **Rom. xv. 8-13.** they too were included in the Divine purpose of love and grace. And Jesus Christ performed this twofold task, fulfilling the promises on behalf of the Jew and revealing the love of God in relation to the Gentile. These two thoughts are respectively brought before us in the first and third Gospels, the one for the Jew and the other for the Gentile. And so the Apostle virtually makes his appeal to the strong (Gentiles) to deal forbearingly with the weak (Jews), by showing that Christ became a Jew in order to fulfil God's promises and purposes to Jews and Gentiles.

Thus Jews and Gentiles are urged to welcome one another, for both alike have been welcomed by God in Christ, even though there was a decided difference in the way in which they were received. The Jew was welcomed in connection with the promises made to his forefathers, and thereby God's fidelity to His word was made abundantly manifest. The Gentiles were welcomed not on account of any covenant position, for they had none, but because of the abundant and free mercy of God. But this difference in the method of receiving makes no difference whatever to the essential unity of Jew and Gentile when they are received. Unity has never meant unanimity of opinion, or uniformity of practice. On the contrary, there has always been an exquisite variety in the works of God in nature and in grace, and this is intended to produce that harmony which will glorify God far more than any mere uniformity could possibly do.

## The Epistle to the Romans

Rom. xv.  
8-13.

The Scrip-  
ture Proof.

III. The Scripture Proof (vers. 9-12).—Four passages from the Old Testament are used in support of this position, proving that this Divine catholicity had been long pre-announced. If God Himself, Who separated Israel from all other nations, has in the Gospel cancelled this distinction as a dividing force, surely His children may follow His example and refuse to allow differences to become divisions. More especially must this be so if for centuries beforehand such an union was contemplated by God Himself (Deut. xxxii. 43; Psa. xviii. 49; Psa. cxvii. 1; Isa. xi. 10). It will be noticed that there is an emphasis on "Gentiles" in each verse, and this is the point of the Apostle's use of the passages. In the first one the Messiah is depicted as praising God among the "Gentiles," and thus the quotation suggests the conversion of those who are associated with Him in the praise. In the second one the Gentiles are exhorted to unite in praise with God's people, the Jews. In the third, which comes from the shortest of the Psalms, we see that God intended to introduce the Gentiles into His worship; and it is noteworthy that the little word "all" occurs twice. In the fourth passage the prophet declares that the Messiah, although coming from David's line, is to be King over the Gentiles, for "In Him shall the Gentiles hope." Thus once again, as in chapter xi., we have the Scriptural assurance that the Gentiles were intended to be brought to Christ. This theme of Gentile salvation was as dear to the heart of the great Apostle as was the conversion of the Jew.

## Christian Brotherhood

Looking over these verses, we can now see what **Rom. xv. 8-13.** was in the Apostle's mind as he addressed himself both to Jews and Gentiles in regard to their duty of mutual considerateness and fellowship in the Church of God. "The Gentiles must remember that Christ became a Jew to save them; the Jews that Christ came among them in order that all the families of the earth might be blessed; both must realise that the aim of the whole is to promote God's glory" (Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, p. 397).

**IV. The Special Prayer (ver. 13).**—Now comes **The Special Prayer.** a prayer, summing up and concluding the entire subject, and, indeed, the whole of the doctrinal part of the Epistle. After showing in the frankest and yet tenderest way the necessity for both parties, Jew and Gentile, weak and strong, to unite in their one Lord and Master, he lifts up his heart for them in this exquisite prayer, feeling sure that if these spiritual realities are experienced there will be no further difficulty or difference, still less division, in the Church. When problems involving possible severance of heart are brought before God in prayer, it is not difficult to see in this the guarantee of a right, complete, and lasting solution.

**1. The Source of Blessing.** "The God of hope." **Blessing—Its Source.** This is a title only used here, and is literally "the God of the hope," the pre-eminent hope of the Old Testament; the God Who gives hope, sustains hope, crowns hope. The title is no doubt suggested by the words immediately preceding, wherein

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Rom. xv. 8-13. the Gentiles are to "hope in the God of Israel." When our souls are in direct fellowship with God as "the God of hope" we are most likely to realise His purpose and will.

—Its Character.

2. The Character of Blessing. "All joy and peace." These are the active and passive sides of Christian experience. Joy is energetic, peace is restful. Scripture speaks much of the joy of salvation, and assures us that "the joy of the Lord is our strength." Peace is the great word of reconciliation, as we contemplate our relations to God and to our fellow-men. Still more, it is "all joy and peace," for everything that God has is to be ours in every way.

—Its Measure.

3. The Measure of Blessing. "Fill you." The Apostle frequently uses this idea of fulness, for he was not content with any poor, narrow, or strained life. He knew that God was "the God of all grace," and he longed for himself and his friends that they might know the abundance that God was only too ready to provide.

—Its Purpose.

4. The Purpose of Blessing. "That ye may abound in hope." Jew and Gentile were to look forward to a glorious future in their Lord. Hope is always connected with the coming of the Master, and in this spirit they were to face the future, and all the problems that might arise. This is the true Christian spirit of optimism and even buoyancy, because it is concentrated on the great event which is certain to happen; "the appearing of our great God and Saviour." Pessimism is altogether alien from the true Christian spirit. A pessimist has

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been aptly described as "a man who with two evils chooses both," but the Christian will always be an optimist, not in a superficial, sentimental sense, but because of the great stronghold of hope which is his in Christ. Rom. xv. 8-13.

5. The Sphere of Blessing. "In the power of the Holy Ghost." —Its Sphere. This is where the life is to be lived. Not by any energy of self, nor by any possibilities of companionship in those around us, but in the constant, surrounding, pervading presence of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, Who enables us to realise our union and communion with Christ and our fellow-Christians.

6. The Channel of Blessing. "In believing." —Its Channel. This is the simple secret of everything. Our life must first of all be a life of faith, and from faith will come joy, peace, and hope. On the side of God it is the Holy Ghost Who works all this in us, and on our side the contact comes through simple trust. Faith links us to Christ, and in this union comes all power and grace.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the appeal is brought to an end, and the argument of the section, and, indeed, the argument of the Epistle, closes with the practical ideas associated with prayer, grace, hope, and praise. Every part of the Epistle from the very beginning has been leading up to this definite personal experience. No mere theological disquisition, no

<sup>1</sup> A most helpful treatment of this wonderful prayer of the Apostle will be found in Bishop Moule's *Romans*, "Expositor's Bible" (p. 403). Perhaps the writer may also refer to his own little book, *Royal and Loyal* (ch. v.) for yet another meditation on these words.



## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xv. 8-13.** mere intellectual argument, but the contact of every Christian soul with his Lord, is the supreme thought of the Apostle's mind, and the constant aim of every line of his writing. "The harmonious glorification of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ by the whole body of the redeemed, as it is the most exalted fruit of the scheme of redemption, so it is the last end of God in it."

**Suggestions  
for Medita-  
tion.**

For the moment it is difficult to realise that these verses close the subject discussed in the long section, ch. xiv. 1-xv. 13, and yet it is essential to remind ourselves of the Apostle's specific purpose in the earlier part. The pressure of the particular problem has altogether disappeared. Foods and festivals cease to trouble us to-day in the way that St Paul's experiences indicate. And yet the value of the treatment is in some respects greater for us, because we find included in it some of the deepest principles connected with Christian brotherhood. Let us briefly sum up these thoughts as we contemplate once again the whole passage.

**Christian  
Brother-  
hood's Law.**

1. The Great Law of Christian Brotherhood. Each for the others and all for each. This is a vital and essential part of our Christianity. The fact that we are related to Christ necessarily carries with it a relation to our fellow-Christians, and in this relationship is involved that spirit of constant thought and unselfish love for our brethren which marks the true Christian life.

**—Purpose.**

2. The Definite Purpose of Christian Brotherhood. "For his good to edification." There are few things more noteworthy in the New Testament



## Christian Brotherhood

than the Apostolic emphasis on "edification." Rom. xv. 8-13.

It is the supreme purpose of God for the Church as inculcated by the Apostle (1 Cor. xiv. 4; Eph. ii. 21; iv. 12, 16). Passage after passage in St Paul's writings has this thought of "edification" as the dominant idea in the Christian life of the individual and of the community. We are brothers in Christ for the one sole purpose of doing our share towards the upbuilding of character and conduct, so that thereby the Divine purpose may be fully realised, and the temple of God, the Church, which is His body, erected and brought to completion.

3. The Perfect Standard of Christian Brotherhood. —Standard. Goal. Once more let us look at the three references in this brief section to the example of Christ. (a) "Christ pleased not Himself" (ver. 3); (b) "according to Christ Jesus" (ver. 5); (c) "as Christ also received you" (ver. 7). Nothing could be simpler and yet more searching than this requirement. We are indeed to "follow His steps," and "walk as He walked."

4. The Divine Source of Christian Brotherhood. —Source. Three titles of God in this passage indicate the graces that we need and the source from which we obtain them: (a) "The God of patience" (or endurance, or steadfastness); (b) "the God of consolation" (or encouragement, or comfort); (c) "the God of hope." With our hearts fixed upon God as the source of all grace Christian brotherhood becomes blessedly possible.

## The Epistle to the Romans

Rom. xv. 5. The Glorious Results of Christian Brother-  
8-13. hood. It is only necessary to mention once again,  
—Results. as suggested by the Apostle's prayer, the wonderful  
outcome of fellowship as it affects the Christian  
life. (a) The fulness of joy; (b) the fulness of  
peace; (c) the abundance of hope; (d) the constant  
and ever-increasing glory of God (vers. 6, 7, 9).

### XIII

## MOTIVES AND METHODS

#### ROM. xv. 14-16

14. And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

15. Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God,

16. That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

THE Epistle proper is now closed, and St Paul **Rom. xv.**  
passes from exhortations to explain his own **14-16.**  
motives and intentions in writing. He thus recurs **Reasons for**  
to those personal elements with which the Epistle **Writing.**  
opened (ch. i. 1-16). The reference, in the form  
of a paragraph, to the Old Testament in regard  
to the actual call to Gentiles as well as to Jews,  
is the point of transition to this courteous and  
affectionate explanation which tells the Roman  
Christians why he had written, and also why  
he had not yet been able to visit them. The  
rest of the chapter is concerned with his personal  
explanations, and after a special reference to the

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xv. 14-16.** Christians at Rome (ver. 14), and to himself as an Apostle (ver. 16), he proceeds in verses 16-33 to give four grounds of personal justification for writing to them. The spiritual truths of the entire passage are many, and each section in turn calls for close study and meditation.

The  
Apostle's  
Courtesy.

I. The Apostle's Courtesy (ver. 14). — With remarkable wisdom and tact he approaches them, pointing out that although he admonishes and exhorts he is nevertheless convinced that they themselves, without any admonition from him, are full of those qualifications for helping others which are so essential in the Christian Church. This noble courtesy is eminently noteworthy. In verse 13 he had prayed that the believers at Rome might be filled with all joy and peace and hope, and throughout the Epistle he had been teaching, guiding, and exhorting them. But he wishes them to know that all this does not mean any self-exaltation above them ; they are his "brethren." Nor is he ignorant of their really remarkable Christian attainments, or merely echoing the almost universal report in their favour (ch. i. 8). He is perfectly aware of their capable Christian life which had impressed him with a personal conviction concerning their proficiency in all necessary service. This attitude of true spiritual delicacy is a fine illustration of the Spirit of Christ in the great Apostle. St Peter shows a similar attitude when he tells those to whom he writes that he is not addressing them as though they were ignorant, but to stir up their pure minds

## Motives and Methods

in the way of remembrance, since they already **Rom. xv. 14-16.** knew the truth and were established in it (2 Pet. i. 12-14; iii. 1). In like manner, St Paul tells his converts in so many words that he has no thought of being a spiritual dictator to them. And yet we all know that notwithstanding the fullest knowledge, or the highest goodness, we are in constant need of having the same things repeated again and again. To know our duty is not always to do it, and the Gospel provides for opportunities of reminder and methods of moral suasion. An inspired Apostle of Christ might well have been expected to write in a tone of great authority, but his constant thought was that he had no dominion over his converts' faith, but was only a helper of their joy (2 Cor. i. 24). True ministers of the Gospel will always adopt and maintain a similar attitude.

Mark the three qualifications here mentioned in connection with the Christians at Rome: "Full of goodness;" "filled with all knowledge;" "able also to admonish one another." (*a*) They were "full of goodness." Their Christian life had become thoroughly settled and grounded in character, and "goodness" is the highest possible proof of our religion. "He was a good man" is the word concerning Barnabas, and when people are "full of goodness," they have reached the highest point of Christian possibility. (*b*) They were "filled with all knowledge." This no doubt refers to spiritual perception rather than mere intellectual attainment. As such, it is the direct

—To men of  
Christian  
Attainments.

## The Epistle to the Romans

Rom. xv. 14-16. result of goodness. It is only the "good" who "know." Goodness invariably produces Christian insight, spiritual perception and a consciousness of Divine truths which cannot be obtained in any other way. It is well known that some of the humblest and most ignorant, unlettered people, so far as this world is concerned, are possessed of the profoundest spiritual experiences by reason of their fellowship with their Master. (c) They were "able also to admonish one another." This naturally followed from the two preceding qualities. Because they were good and had spiritual insight they were able to administer the necessary guidance or correction to their fellow-Christians, and thus help forward the life of the Church. The combination of "goodness" and "knowledge" was the secret of their power over others. The two should always go together, and neither of them alone is sufficient for the duty of "admonishing" our brethren. Happy the Christian community of which these three things are true; that they possess goodness, knowledge, and helpfulness.

The  
Apostle's  
Courage.

II. The Apostle's Courage (ver. 15).—Having thus endeavoured to remove from their minds anything that might have created an unfavourable influence on their attitude to him, he proceeds to say why he felt it necessary to address them at such length. He has dared the more boldly to write this Epistle, on account of their possession of these spiritual gifts, though his boldness might seem greater than was warranted by his reference



## Motives and Methods

to the weak ones in ch. xv. 1. "In some sort" **Rom. xv. 14-16.** means "in some degree," referring to those parts of the Epistle which are more bold than others. It has been suggested that the following passages are specially applicable to this thought of frankness: ch. vi. 12-21; xi. 17, 18; xii. 3; xiii. 3, 4; and specially ch. xiv. 1-xv. 13. Godet, however, thinks that the phrase "in part" does not refer to the contents of the teaching, but to the *method* of giving instruction. St Paul is writing to them, not with the view of teaching what was new, but reminding them of things known "in part," or "to a certain degree." He wished to treat them, not as learners, but as mature brethren in Christ. Whichever view we take of this expression we again notice St Paul's courtesy and modesty. His boldness, as we shall see in a moment, is due to his position as the Apostle of the Gentiles, but he was fully aware that the discussion of truths already familiar was only part of his design. The Epistle records some of the profoundest thoughts ever expressed by the human mind, and this also was "in part" his aim in writing. Yet of this he says nothing, for he is more than content to let them discover for themselves that in writing as he has they have unwittingly, but really, obtained unfathomable treasures of Christian truth.

III. The Apostle's Claim (ver. 16).—It is his **The**  
calling as the Apostle to the Gentiles that gives **Apostle's**  
him the right to address them. **Claim.** "That I should  
be a minister of Christ Jesus unto the Gentiles,

## The Epistle to the Romans

Rom. xv. 14-16. ministering the Gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be made acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit." In these words he likens himself and his work to the priest of old. The preaching of the Gospel is his priestly function, and the believing Gentiles constitute his offering to God. As a preacher, he is doing the work of a priest, and each time he preaches he performs an act of priestly consecration. It need hardly be said that this passage is no exception to the well-known fact that the Christian ministry is never described technically in the New Testament as a priesthood. The term "priest" (*ιερεύς*) in the singular number is never applied to anyone in connection with Christianity but the Lord Jesus Christ Himself—not even to the individual Christian. The only reference to Christians in regard to priesthood is either the use of the plural (Rev. i. 6), or else a word implying the Church in its collective capacity (1 Pet. ii. 5, 9). The essential function of a priest is the representation of man to God (Heb. v. 1), and when this is clearly understood it is at once obvious that there is nothing in which the Christian minister, or layman, can be the representative of his fellows to God. Christianity provides for each man to enter and abide in the Divine presence for himself. In public worship the minister is often necessarily the mouthpiece of the congregation, but this is not a priestly, only a ministerial function. So the passage before us is altogether in line with the rest of the New Testament.

## Motives and Methods

We should with these verses compare ch. xii. 1. **Rom. xv. 14-16.** In the latter the believer presents himself a living sacrifice to God. In the former the Gospel labourer is the offerer, his offering being the converts given him by God. But "the offering of the nations" is only acceptable to God as "sanctified in the Holy Ghost," and since we know that "they that are in the flesh cannot please God," we recall the Apostle's words that Christians are "not in the flesh, but in the Spirit" (ch. viii. 8, 9).

As we have already noticed, this short passage is a marvellous revelation of St Paul's personal spiritual life. Suggestions for Meditation. Let us concentrate attention on the aspects of Christian service here delineated (vers. 15, 16).

1. The Source of Ministry. "The grace that was given me of God." Only by the grace of God can our service be acceptable. It is God's work, and the power to do it must come from God. That is why the Apostle said, "Not I, but the grace of God" (1 Cor. xv. 10). Ministry : Its Source.

2. The Purpose of Ministry. "That I should be a minister of Christ Jesus." What a privilege it is to be a Temple servant, a public functionary belonging to Jesus Christ. "Such honour have all His saints." The word used here is that found in ch. xiii. 4 of civil rulers. Paul recognises his work as having just as much authority and importance as the office of an Emperor or King. —Purpose.

3. The Sphere of Ministry. "Unto the Gentiles." —Sphere. This was the special place in which God had set the Apostle. He was commissioned to the whole

## The Epistle to the Romans

Rom. xv. Gentile world. He has already told us that he  
14-16. felt indebted to the Gentile as well as to the Jew  
(ch. i. 14). To St Paul in his day, and to us in ours,  
the evangelisation of the world is our highest  
obligation and most pressing duty. We have no  
right whatever to limit salvation to home fields,  
and we should resolutely face this universal sphere  
as the one in which God's purposes of grace find  
their culmination.

—Work.

4. The Work of Ministry. The second word  
used by the Apostle in this passage in connection  
with his service is, as we have seen, very suggestive :  
“Ministering the Gospel of God.” Thus there are  
two ideas, the ambassador and the priest. Our  
work is at once kingly and priestly. We are to  
show the boldness of the public official and the  
tenderness of the personal priest. The Apostle's  
conception of his work is sacrificial, and while he  
was in no sense a mediator his labour consisted in  
something more than mere teaching ; his entire life  
of service was an act of consecration as he offered  
himself to God on behalf of his work. This is the  
spirit of true service, and the more we realise the  
cost of our work the more effective will it be.

—End.

5. The End of Ministry. “That the offering of  
the Gentiles may be acceptable.” The purpose of  
his efforts was to bring about such changes in the  
lives of the people that they should be made an  
offering well-pleasing to God. The work would  
not be done at once, but would be ever growing  
and deepening as he was able to proclaim the  
Gospel, and the people were enabled to receive it

## Motives and Methods

and reproduce it in their lives. This thought of **Rom. xv.** converts as an acceptable offering to God should **14-16.** impress itself upon the heart of every Christian worker as the end and object of all service.

6. *The Crown of Ministry.* "Sanctified." This —**Crown.** was to be the result of the acceptable offering of the Gentiles. Their lives should be consecrated to God. Sin tends inevitably to separate man from God, and through the reconciliation of the Gospel the sinner is brought back, not merely to forgiveness, but that his life may be possessed and used by God for His service.

7. *The Guarantee of Ministry.* "In the Holy —**Guarantee.** Ghost." This is the supreme thought in connection with all work for God, the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, and this it is that makes the difference between work that is real and work that is not. Only as we labour in the energy of the Divine grace shall we find our service of any effect either to God or to man. The mighty work of the world's evangelisation must be in the power of the Holy Spirit if it is to be of any value.

## XIV

# THE WORKER'S VINDICATION

### ROM. xv. 17-21

17. I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God.

18. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed.

19. Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God ; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ.

20. Yea, so have I strived to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation :

21. But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see : and they that have not heard shall understand.

**Rom. xv. 17-21.** THE Apostle is still intent on putting himself on the best possible terms with readers who have not yet met him. He has pleaded his office as Apostle to the Gentiles in support of his action in addressing this letter to them. Now he takes a further step and states with exquisite simplicity and true Christian modesty that he is not only an Apostle, but an Apostle who has been used of God in his work. In this courteous and tender way he desires to commend himself to the believers in Rome.



## The Worker's Vindication

I. *The Apostles' Boasting* (ver. 17).—Here again he uses the word “boasting” which, as we have seen (vol. i., p. 160), is capable of being separated from its unworthy associations. He has justification for boasting in Christ in relation to those things which God had used him to accomplish. He had no thought of magnifying himself, for his glorying was “in Christ Jesus,” and the Gospel of which he was the instrument in preaching did not belong to him. His share was wholly ministerial; all that he desired to do was to glory in his Master in regard to the successful discharge of his work as a servant of the Gospel. He felt that he had this privilege of boasting; “I possess, therefore, the boasting in Christ Jesus,” and yet with the privilege there was the immediate result of his subjection to the Master from Whom all grace had come.

Rom. xv.  
17-21.

The  
Apostle's  
Boasting.

II. *The Apostle's Humility* (ver. 18).—He will only speak of his own labours, and will not dare to refer to anything in which he had no personal share. It would be the highest presumption to mention anything outside his own sphere. This method of expression is probably due to his sensitiveness of anything like the idea of superiority over others. While his sphere was pre-eminently that of the Apostle to the Gentiles, yet he will carefully limit himself to those things in which Christ had used him, thus recognising with becoming modesty that others have been labouring in the same sphere as himself. And even though he speaks of his own labours, yet he at once lays

The  
Apostle's  
Humility.

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xv. 17-21.** the emphasis on Christ rather than on himself, "those which Christ wrought through me." This combination of boasting and humility is particularly striking and indicates the true servant of Jesus Christ.

**The  
Apostle's  
Frankness.**

**III. *The Apostle's Frankness* (vers. 18, 19).—**Now he will speak in the plainest terms of the remarkable nature and extent of his service in the Gospel. Its character is evident from the description: "word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders in the power of the Holy Spirit" (R.V.). It was impossible to overlook the power and blessing of his labours in leading Gentiles to the foot of the Cross. In this plain statement we have the vindication of the Apostleship of St Paul, and his appeal to the fact of "signs and wonders" shows conclusively that these things must have taken place, or he could have been answered by testimony and silenced for ever. Nothing short of deception on the part of a vast number of converts can explain their silence as to these claims to the working of miracles, and everything that we know of the Apostle and his life, surrounded as it was with virulent opposition, goes to show the reality of the claim here made.

**The  
Apostle's  
Testimony.**

**IV. *The Apostle's Testimony* (ver. 19).—**The scope and extent of the work were as remarkable as its nature, for he had been able to proclaim the Gospel from Jerusalem right to the north-west of Macedonia. Illyricum may be the Roman province (also called Dalmatia), which was north of Macedonia and west of Thrace; or it may have

## The Worker's Vindication

been the Illyrian country in the Roman province of Macedonia. Dr Beet thinks that it corresponds roughly to the present Turkish province of Albania. The remarkable width and extent of his labours are evident, and again we are faced with a claim which nothing but absolute fact could substantiate. His method of expressing what he had done is particularly significant: "I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ." The thought is not merely that of faithful, but of complete preaching. He had announced his message as fully as it was possible to do it, and had published the joyous tidings at the chief centres on his way from Jerusalem to Illyricum. Rom. xv. 17-21.

The history in the Acts reveals something of the strategy of the Apostle. His main thought was to concentrate on great centres, and by limiting his own evangelistic labours to these places the message of the Gospel could then be carried by the churches in the cities into the rural districts around. We know that although he was very near Colosse he never visited the place, which was evangelised by one of his own converts, Epaphras (Col. i. 6, 7; see ii. 1). This strategical method shows the true Christian statesman, and might almost warrant the assertion of the principle, "Take care of the cities and the villages will take care of themselves." —His Strategy. This may not be as true to-day as in St Paul's time, for conditions vary considerably, but there is a truth even for us in the constant insistence upon strengthening to the fullest extent our labours in great centres of population. The Apostle's prolonged stay at places like Corinth and Ephesus

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xv. 17-21.** proved beyond question what he meant by "fully preaching" the Gospel of Christ. How marvellous were these efforts of the tireless, courageous, pioneer worker, more especially, as while writing this Epistle, he was contemplating a further extension of work in far-off Spain. If only the Church of God to-day had more men of this type the whole world could soon be evangelised.

**The  
Apostle's  
Aim.**

**V. *The Apostle's Aim*** (vers. 20, 21).—In all this work he had one dominant thought: indeed, the expression he uses indicates something like "ambition." He endeavoured to preach the Gospel only where Christ had not been named. He was particularly anxious not to build upon another man's foundation, and he made it a matter of personal honour to work on virgin soil. To confirm this he quotes from Isa. lii. 15, thus again supporting the reality of his Apostleship to the Gentiles by a reference to the Jewish Scriptures. This intense longing to let people know of Christ who had never before heard of Him is a special call to the churches to-day who are crowding workers into the home field and doing comparatively little for the "regions beyond." Happy is that Christian, and happy is that community, where the Apostle's aim is set first and foremost.

**Suggestions  
for Medita-  
tion.**

As we review this brief yet pregnant section we are impressed with the simple but significant way in which the Apostle reveals some of the essentials of Christian service.

**Work and  
Results.**

**L. *Work for God should be marked by Definite Results*** (ver. 18). God does not intend any of us

## The Worker's Vindication

to labour in vain, or spend our strength for nought, **Rom. xv. 17-21.** and, though results may vary, we are justified in expecting them if only we are faithful to the Gospel and to the true methods of proclaiming it. Of course it is essential to distinguish between "having" results and "seeing" them, and it is the former rather than the latter that should be kept in mind. God may often grant results which are invisible to the worker. And yet if a man is working for God year after year without seeing some fruit of his labour, he may well ask himself whether he is serving God where or as his Master desires.

2. *The Worker as an Instrument, not an Agent* **Work and the Worker.** (ver. 18). The Apostle gloried in Christ, and spoke of those things that Christ had wrought through him. This is the true attitude of the Christian worker: God is the real worker and the Christian is the tool. We are sometimes inclined to think that we are to work and to call in God as our helper. The proper attitude is that of God as the Agent and the believer as His instrument. We do not overlook the fact that instruments or tools have no wills, but even this does not make a fundamental distinction, because, as Tennyson says, "Our wills are ours to make them Thine." As the Lord Himself always did the will of His Father, and the words that He spoke and the works that He performed were not His own but His Father's, so it is our privilege, as it ought to be our glory, to be as ready for the Master's use as the pen or the chisel in the hand of a workman. When Joshua went up to the stranger before Jericho he asked whether He was



## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xv. 17-21.** for Israel or for their enemies. The significant answer came that He was neither "for" one or the other. He had not come to assist, but to take charge, to supersede Joshua, and to control the affairs of Israel. At once Joshua recognised the state of the case and said, "What saith my Lord unto His servant" (Josh. v. 14). It will make all the difference to our Christian work if we realise that it is "Not I, but Christ"; "Not I, but the grace of God."

### Work and Purpose.

3. *The Practical Purpose of Christian Work* (ver. 18). The one and all-embracing purpose stated by the Apostle is "the obedience of the Gentiles." It is identical with what he describes elsewhere as "the obedience of faith" (ch. i. 5; xvi. 26). Our work is nothing less, and it can be nothing more than this, to bring men into subjection to God, and to that obedience which is the expression of faith in Him. Everything is to converge to this end. All knowledge, all privileges, all experience, all blessings, are intended to express themselves in simple, loyal, constant obedience. It would simplify our work for God if we ever kept in view our one object of bringing God to man and man to God.

### Work and Methods.

4. *Variety of Methods in Christian Work* (ver. 18). The Apostle was not confined to one plan of making known the Gospel of Christ. Sometimes it was done by word, sometimes by deed. But whatever was the method the object was the same. Christian workers will be well advised to make their methods as varied as possible. God has many



## The Worker's Vindication

ways of approaching men and there are many **Rom. xv. 17-21.** avenues of entrance into His kingdom. Be it ours to keep a sharp look out for every method new and old whereby men may be brought face to face with Christ.

5. The Divine Demonstration of Christian Work **Work and Demonstration.** (ver. 19). The Apostle was able to speak of signs and wonders in the power of the Spirit of God, and although in one sense we do not experience to-day what was then regarded as miraculous, the Spirit of God is still at work and sets His seal on our ministry by working miracles of grace. God still shows His power, and difficulties are a challenge to His Divine working. The supreme need of every worker at home and abroad is the possession and power of the Holy Spirit, and when He is manifested in heart and life the results are in demonstration of the grace and blessing of God. The mighty work here depicted is altogether beyond the power even of a mighty thinker and worker like St Paul. It must be the work of the Holy Spirit, and only as this Divine energy possesses the worker can he expect the results to accrue.

6. The Remarkable Thoroughness of Christian Work **Work and Zeal.** (ver. 19). The more we ponder the Apostle's words the more deeply we are impressed with the reality of his service extending over so many years. There was a deep hunger for the souls of men that prompted him to preach fully the Gospel of Christ in such a remarkable way and to such a wide extent. He eagerly longed for everyone to know that which was everything to him. The need of

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xv. 17-21.** this missionary spirit which prompts us to take the Gospel all over the world is becoming more and more widely felt among the churches, and we do well to pray that God will constantly put and keep this earnest desire and definite aim in the hearts of His people. It must be an exquisite joy to tell someone of Christ who has never before heard of Him; to be the first to narrate "the Sweet Story of Old" to some heart which without knowing it may have been longing for the satisfaction that Christ alone can give.

"Let us go to the regions beyond,  
Where the Story has never been told;  
To the millions who never of Jesus have heard,  
Let us take the 'Sweet Story of Old.'"

**Work and Plan.**

7. *The Persistent Plan in Christian Work* (ver. 20). The Apostle had a definite aim, one of the three points of "honour," or "ambition," mentioned in the New Testament in connection with him. His first "ambition" was to be "acceptable" to his Lord and Master (2 Cor. v. 9). His second "ambition" was to be simple, quiet, consistent in ordinary Christian living (1 Thess. iv. 11). Here we notice his third "ambition," that of proclaiming Christ wherever He had not been named. This definite plan indicates one of the most important features of Christian work to day. If only we observed the Apostle's rule how easy it would be to prevent overlapping in work for God. It is a thousand pities when the whole world is practically open to the Churches of Christ that there should

## The Worker's Vindication

ever be an instance of more than one evangelical **Rom. xv.**  
community working in any small or contracted **17-21.**  
sphere. Both at home and abroad there should be  
clear lines of delimitation, and particular churches  
should be left free to proclaim the Gospel within  
these borders, following such a definite plan as is  
here indicated. Christian work should always be  
marked by thought, consideration, wisdom and  
statesmanship. As it has been well put, "First  
plan your work, and then work your plan."

## XV

# A WORKER'S PLANS

### ROM. xv. 22-29

22. For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.

23. But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you ;

24. Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you : for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your *company*.

25. But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.

26. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.

27. It hath pleased them verily ; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.

28. When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.

29. And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

**Rom. xv. 22-29.** St Paul now gives the third proof of his interest in the Christians at Rome by referring to his plans for visiting them. Difficulties seemed to be clearing, and the way was apparently opening for his coming. We have in these simple statements another interesting and even remarkable revelation of the Apostle's character and life.

## A Worker's Plans

I. Hindrances (ver. 22).—His immense labours throughout the 1400 miles of territory mentioned in the former section had long prevented him from fulfilling his intense desire of visiting Rome. The way in which he states the difficulties should be noted. "Again and again I was hindered many times." Indeed, it was an almost constant succession of difficulties. All this shows that the Apostle's work was carefully arranged and not prosecuted on any haphazard plan. Rom. xv. 22-29.  
Hindrances.

II. Openings (ver. 23).—It is surprising that he is able to say he has "no more place in these parts." This can only mean that there was no locality still unevangelised ; no place where he had not in one way or another proclaimed the Gospel. It cannot mean that he had been everywhere himself, for we know that it was his custom to concentrate on important strategical centres ; but it certainly implies that by means of the efforts of those whom he had led to Christ all these regions had been thoroughly evangelised. The way was therefore open for him to proceed further west, taking Rome on his way to Spain. The tireless, eager Evangelist was ever on the alert for fresh fields to conquer for his Master. Openings.

III. Longings (ver. 23).—"Having a great desire these many years to come unto you." Here again he recurs to his intense longing to get to Rome (ch. i. 10, 11). It was legitimate that he should be influenced by this desire, for as Apostle to the Gentiles it was the most natural thing for him to wish to be at the centre and heart of his Longings.

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xv. 22-29.** great field. While he was of course ready to go to the place where God wished him to be, the Divine will was doubtless often indicated by the servant's personal desires, or by some natural yet providential circumstances. It was no mere wish to visit a great metropolis, but an intense longing to witness for his Master in the very heart of heathendom.

**Intentions.** IV. Intentions (ver. 24)—The Apostle's purpose was to go to Spain, taking Rome by the way. He could have reached his goal direct by an easy voyage, though he did not wish to do this, but, instead, to make a stay in the metropolis. Whether his purpose of reaching Spain was ever accomplished is altogether unknown, and probably will never be settled by any historical discovery. So far as we can trace, no primitive tradition connects St Paul with Spain. The fact that he here expresses his purpose does not of necessity imply its fulfilment. The Holy Spirit doubtless had been leading him to desire and endeavour to go to the "boundary of the West." But this in itself was no assurance that the hopes would be accomplished. It is impossible to avoid recalling the fact that the Pauline Gospel was remarkably powerful in Spain in the sixteenth century until it was utterly crushed by the horrors of the Inquisition. Once again Spain is becoming open to the Gospel, and St Paul is visiting that country through his Epistles. Much remains to be done and hindrances are still mighty, but in spite of them all "the Gospel according to St Paul" will



## A Worker's Plans

penetrate into every part of that beautiful and as yet dark land. Rom. xv.  
22-29.

V. Hopes (ver. 24).—The personal reference to his visit to Rome is a fine illustration of the Apostle's desire for Christian fellowship and the exquisite courtesy and tact with which he states his expectation of it. He hopes to see the Christians in Rome on his journey, and to be escorted by them after having had the enjoyment of their company. Let us notice the exact statement. "If first I be somewhat filled with your company." Quite literally we may render the words, "somewhat enjoyed you" (cf. ch. 1. 12). The "somewhat" means "not as much as I might wish, but as far as circumstances will allow." It indicates in a very beautiful way that the Christians at Rome would have more to give than he would have time to receive. This expression of a desire and hope for Christian fellowship on the part of a strong, self-contained man like St Paul is a striking testimony to the power of the new company of Christians and of the grace of Christ abiding among them.

VI. Projects (vers. 25-28).—Meanwhile the Apostle had a very important work immediately in front of him. He was on his way to Jerusalem, carrying with him contributions to the Christians in Macedonia and Achaia for the poor among the saints in the mother city. Persecution had doubtless led to poverty. The fact of a man's profession of Christianity would easily lead, as it has done since, to the loss of custom and the deprivation of

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xv. 22-29.** employment. Hence the need of a wide appeal to Gentile Christians to support these poor believers in Jerusalem. This collection was one of St. Paul's great thoughts at that time (Acts xx. 4; 1 Cor. xvi. 1-4; 2 Cor. viii., ix; Gal. vi. 10.). It was not merely an opportunity for the exercise of Christian benevolence, but something far more important; it was a splendid means of accomplishing one of the deepest purposes of the Apostle, the union of Jewish and Gentile Christians and the realisation that they were one body in Christ. We know from other Epistles how heavily this burden was laid upon his heart, and how in every available way he endeavoured to bring the two great sections of Christians together.

Here, however, he is concerned with the relationship of the two bodies of Christians, and he shows there was a sense in which the Gentiles were indebted to the Jews for their very Christianity (ver. 27). If spiritual blessings had accrued to the Gentiles from the Jews it was not surprising that some part of the debt should be repaid in things temporal. A similar distinction between the "carnal" and the "spiritual" is used by the Apostle in connection with the Christian ministry (1 Cor. ix. 11). This is one of the instances of the mutual relationship of Jew and Gentile on which he dwelt with such force in chapter xi.

The importance of the project is abundantly evident from the words, "When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit." The "fruit" was the product of his proper work,

## A Worker's Plans

and the "sealing" was the official completion and **Rom. xv.** consummation of the task. He felt that it was **22-29.** part of his duty as Apostle to the Gentiles, himself a Jew, to deliver this gift safely and to make sure that the project was accomplished. There were others who could have taken the money with as much safety as Paul himself, but his purpose in going on this mission was to do his utmost to disarm Jewish jealousy with regard to himself and the Gentiles. Nothing short of this could possibly have kept him from going westwards to Rome and Spain. This done he would be altogether free to realise his hopes of reaching the terminus of Gentile opportunity, as it was in his day.<sup>1</sup>

VII. Convictions (ver. 29).—Now the Apostle **Convictions.** turns with evident relief to the contemplation of his westward journey, and without any hesitation he expresses his conviction that when he comes it will be "in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ." This was the one thing of which he was absolutely sure. He had prayed for a prosperous journey (ch. i. 10); he had expressed his readiness if opportunity offered to preach the Gospel in Rome (ch. i. 15); he had also told them of his intense desire to go to Spain (vers. 23, 24). But all these were merely among possibilities and contingencies which might or might not be trans-

<sup>1</sup> It is impossible to avoid calling attention to Paley's *Horæ Paulinæ*, in which the passages in Acts and the Epistles in regard to this collection for the saints at Jerusalem are brought together and carefully discussed. As a piece of New Testament evidence Paley's work is as original as it is permanently valuable.

## The Epistle to the Romans

Rom. xv. 22-29. formed into actualities. The one thing of which he was perfectly certain was that if the way opened and he had his desires realised it would be in close association with "the fulness of the blessing of Christ" (R.V.). Not only would he as an Apostle be enabled to bestow upon them the gifts of the Holy Spirit (ch. i. 11), but he himself would experience spiritual blessing at their hands (ch. i. 12). He was sure that God would give success to his Gospel, and that when he was present the fulness of the Divine blessing would be realised, and the visit fraught with the happiest results to him and to them.

Suggestions  
for Medita-  
tion.

In this section we have suggestions from one of the greatest of Christian workers in regard to the varied experiences of service for Christ.

Christian  
Service—  
Difficulties.

1. Difficulties in Daily Work (ver. 22). The hindrances which the Apostle experienced are not different in kind from those that constantly arise in connection with Christian work. We must not be surprised by such hindrances. Satan does not easily relinquish any of his subjects, and when the Gospel of Christ is proclaimed it requires obedience (ver. 18), and thus is pretty certain to meet with opposition of various kinds. The boy's definition of difficulty as "a thing to be got over" may well be laid to heart by all Christian workers.

—Desires.

2. Desire for Further Service (ver. 23). The Apostle was never tired of serving Christ. He was doubtless often wearied in the work, but never of it, and when an opportunity for serving his Master came to an end in one place he was ready to turn

## A Worker's Plans

eagerly to another. This is always the mark of a true labourer. "Something attempted, something done" is not intended to earn "repose," but to be the preparation and inspiration for something else to be accomplished. Let us heed the Apostle's example of being always occupied in some way in his Master's vineyard. **Rom. xv. 22-29.**

3. Delight in Christian Fellowship (ver. 24). —Delight.  
How great was the pleasure the Apostle had in the society of his fellow-believers. Christians ought to rejoice in meeting one another, however much hitherto they may have been strangers according to the flesh. The more Christian fellowship we can realise and cultivate the greater the power and blessing that will accrue to the Church as a whole and the particular community with which we are associated. Every Christian has some gift of God, and we ought to welcome every occasion of realising our oneness in Christ, and at the same time of learning lessons that are being taught to others and of receiving blessings from God through them. A large-hearted fellowship that endeavours to see Christ in all those who name Him is one of the finest illustrations of the true spirit of the Gospel.

4. Duty to Fellow-Christians (vers. 25-27). —Duty.  
Fellowship means something more than enjoyment; it calls for effort, and if necessary even self-sacrifice. The Apostle concentrated his attention on helping the poor saints in Jerusalem, and wherever we can find any member of "the household of faith" it is our bounden duty to do him "good" as one of the

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xv. 22-29.** most signal proofs of our Christlikeness and our essential unity in Him. The New Testament makes very prominent this thought of practical fellowship, and it will be in every way spiritually uplifting if we do the same.

—Dependence.

5. Dependence upon God (vers. 28, 29). In all our service for Christ we must never forget that God is to come first. Amidst all the hopes, desires, longings, intentions, aspirations, purposes, determinations, St Paul never forgot that it was only as he lived in the fulness of blessing that blessing could accrue to others through him. It is a temptation on the part of workers to continue their service without due regard to the Source and Sphere of spiritual power. Our work will never rise higher than our character, and our character will never be stronger than the measure of our communion with Christ. Be it ours to live in union and communion with Him, and then our service will be inevitably and increasingly blessed.



## XVI

# A WORKER'S NEED

### ROM. xv. 30-33

30. Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in *your* prayers to God for me ;

31. That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea ; and that my service which *I have* for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints ;

32. That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.

33. Now the God of peace *be* with you all. Amen.

It was evident that St Paul was full of deep **Rom. xv.** anxiety, as he faced his journey to Jerusalem. 30-33.

His fear was twofold. On the one hand, he contemplated the possibility of opposition from unbelieving Jews who hated him, and persecuted him on every occasion. On the other hand, he was uncertain whether the gift from the Gentile Churches, of which he was the bearer, would be found acceptable by the narrow, bigoted, Jewish Christians at Jerusalem. We know from the history how well grounded the fear of opposition was (Acts xx. 3, 22 ; xxi. 11). Hence a great peril was before him, and he was clearly in doubt, indeed, was in great fear as to the result. He was

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xv. 30-33.** suspected to such an extent by his enemies that he hoped the contribution he was bringing would be a means of producing peace.

**An Earnest Request for Prayer.**

I. An Earnest Request for Prayer (ver. 30).—  
The wording is particularly significant. "Now I beseech you, brethren." Paul had often prayed for them (ch. i. 9, 10), and now he beseeches them to pray for him. His anxiety for their prayers is a mark of his confidence in them. He knew them to be a praying Church.

**A Definite Motive for Prayer.**

II. A Definite Motive for Prayer (ver. 30).—  
The Apostle dwells upon a twofold motive, or, perhaps it would be more correct to say, two distinct though connected motives. The first is "for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake," that is, "by the feelings towards Christ that actuate you." The cause of Christ was undoubtedly involved in the Apostle's circumstances, and any failure in his mission would be taken to reflect upon the Master Himself. No wonder that he begs them to pray "by our Lord Jesus Christ." The other motive is "for the love of the Spirit." This seems to mean the love of God which the Holy Spirit sheds abroad in the hearts of all Christians (ch. v. 5). The reference would thus be to the love which Christians have one to another, and it is termed "the love of the Spirit" because it is produced in the heart by the Spirit of God. Other writers suggest that the interpretation is "the love which the Holy Spirit has to Christians," and while this is no doubt true in itself it may be questioned whether it is the meaning of the present passage.

## A Worker's Need

In another Epistle St Paul speaks of "the fellowship of the Spirit" (Phil. ii. 1), which seems to mean the fellowship produced in Christian hearts by the Holy Spirit. Godet thinks that "the love of the Spirit" means "that love which is necessarily different from the love that exists between persons who know one another individually." In either case this twofold motive for prayer is very notable. By their feeling towards our Lord and also towards His Apostle, as expressed in the Holy Spirit's gift of love, they were to pray for him.

Rom. xv.  
30-33.

III. A Striking Description of Prayer (ver. 30).— "That ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me." Prayer is here shown to be a struggle, for the word "strive" is used as of an athletic contest. More than once the Apostle employs this term, indicating that there are hostile powers to be faced whenever prayer is offered. He here associates the Roman Christians in his own prayers for himself. It would be well if we realised more frequently than we do the seriousness of prayer, that it is indeed "the Christian's vital breath." Instead of prayer being the easiest, it is the hardest work of the Christian, because principalities and powers of evil combine to oppose the progress of the soul in prayer, and thereby to hinder the Divine answers. St Paul was anxious that his Colossian friends should know what his own prayers for them meant in the way of strife, struggle, and contest (Col. ii. 1), and in his description of Epaphras the same thought is found: "always striving for you in prayers" (Col. iv. 12).

A Striking  
Description  
of Prayer.

## The Epistle to the Romans

Rom. xv.  
30-33.

A Threefold  
Petition in  
Prayer.

IV. A Threefold Petition in Prayer (vers. 31, 32).—Three objects are specified, as to which the Apostle was keenly anxious: (a) To be delivered from the unbelieving Jews; (b) to have his ministration accepted by the Christians in Jerusalem; (c) to come to Rome with joy by the will of God, and to find rest in Christian fellowship there. The first of these petitions is a very natural one because the opposition of the vast majority of the Jews was a real force, especially as directed against St Paul. His transformation from one of the ablest opponents of Christianity to one of its ablest advocates was particularly hateful to his fellow-countrymen, and he had nothing to expect but virulent hostility which might easily go to extreme lengths. We know indeed from the history how far the Jews were prepared to carry their opposition to St Paul (Acts xxi.-xxvi.). It is almost incredible, did we not know it for fact, to read of the intensely bitter spirit with which they dogged his steps and used their utmost endeavours to get him within their power. But even the prospect of this danger could not deter him from going, because he felt that it was his Master's will, and more than once during his journey he expressed his readiness to suffer and to die if necessary (Acts xx. 22-24; xxi. 13).

The second petition was that the Apostle's service might be acceptable when he reached Jerusalem. In the ordinary course of events a gift like this could not have been other than welcome, but the prejudices and animosities against St Paul on the subject of the uncircumcised Gentile Christians

## A Worker's Need

were so intense that he evidently feared that **Rom. xv. 30-33.** even a generous gift, especially with himself as the instrumentality, might fail of acceptance. That he had reason to fear rejection of his loving and large-hearted proposal seems to be pretty evident from the story of his reception in Jerusalem, and yet he was determined to make the attempt because of its far-reaching influence, if successful, in leading to the real union of Jewish and Gentile believers in Christ.

The third petition had reference to himself. He desired to come to Rome with joy instead of being weighted down with the sorrow of a failure at Jerusalem, and he wished this to take place "by the will of God," and not merely by reason of his own intense desire to see them. Further, he wished that in coming, there might be a mutual refreshment of rest, and enjoyment of spirit on both sides: on his, after his anxieties; on theirs, after their fears lest he should not come.

V. A Definite Blessing through Prayer (ver. 33). **A Definite Blessing through Prayer.**—Now the Apostle himself prays as he commends them to "the God of peace." This title of God is of special force in connection with the Apostle's anxieties and fears of trouble. Peace was the supreme object of all his prayers and efforts, and it could only come from the God of peace. It is the fourth title of God found in this chapter: "the God of patience" (ver. 5); "the God of consolation" (ver. 5); "the God of hope" (ver. 13); "the God of peace" (ver. 33). The last-named title is found very frequently in the Pauline writings, and seems

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xv. 30-33.** invariably to unite the ideas of peace between God and man, issuing in peace between Christian brethren (Phil. iv. 9; 1 Thess. v. 23; Heb. xiii. 20).

**Suggestions for Meditation.**

In these verses we gain a clear insight into the Apostle's view of prayer in relation to service. It was to him the prime secret of blessing in Christian work.

**Prayer—Its Fellowship.**

1. The Fellowship of Prayer. The Apostle often sought the prayers of his Christian brethren. We might have thought of him as so strong in Christ as not to need the cheer derived from association in intercession with his fellow-believers. But his very strength led him to desire this oneness with his brethren. He had a profound consciousness of the manifold variety of grace in the Church and this led him to seek the prayers of those who knew how to approach the throne of God. It was no weakness that prompted him to pour out his anxieties to the Christians of Rome whom he had never seen. On the contrary he desires them to share with him the responsibility of facing these difficulties and finding in prayer the perfect victory over them. Let us never hesitate, therefore, to seek the loving assistance of brethren in prayer, and let us feel assured that such prayer will be used of God to bring about great results.

**—Its Power.**

2. The Power of Prayer. While prayer is mysterious in its methods it is undoubtedly mighty in its force. God has conditioned spiritual blessings on the exercise of prayer, and every Christian man in proportion as he knows the reality of spiritual things will rejoice in the consciousness that prayer



## A Worker's Need

means power. It is no mere poetic thought that **Rom. xv.** suggests the world as "bound by gold chains about **30-33.** the feet of God," for prayer bridges all distances and overcomes all obstacles. The stronger our faith in prayer the more blessed and powerful will our life be.

"The weary ones had rest, the sad had joy  
That day, and wondered 'how.'  
A ploughman, singing at his work, had prayed,  
'Lord, help them now.'

Away in foreign lands they wondered how  
Their simple word had power.  
At home, the Christians two or three had met  
To pray an hour.

Yes, we are always wond'ring, wond'ring "how":  
Because we do not see  
Someone, unknown perhaps, and far away,  
On bended knee!"<sup>1</sup>

3. The Results of Prayer. We naturally think —Its  
of the way in which the Apostle's petitions were Results.  
answered, and if we had this passage only, our  
impression would be very different from what was  
actually the case.

"We think we see the Apostle, after happily finishing his mission in Palestine, embarking full of joy, and guided by the will of God; then arriving at Rome, there to rest his weary heart among his brethren in the joy of the common salvation, and to recover new strength for a new work" (Godet, *Romans*, vol. ii., p. 384).

While this was the glowing picture that the

<sup>1</sup> *How; And Other Poems*, by F. M. N. (Partridge & Co.).

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xv. 30-33.** Apostle's expectation painted, the actual fact was altogether different. He was delivered out of the power of his enemies in Jerusalem, he did reach Rome, and so far, the desires of his heart were granted, but "the Lord took His own way, a way they knew not, to answer Paul and his friends" (Moule, *Romans*, p. 417). A little child was once asked whether God answers every prayer. "Yes," said the child, "but sometimes He answers 'Yes' and sometimes 'No.'" The Apostle little realised when or how he would reach the city of Rome, but God had not forgotten him, and the Divine assurance given him in the midst of his troubles at Jerusalem, "Thou must also bear witness of Me in Rome," was the inspiration of those weary weeks and months until at last he landed in Italy and the brethren from Rome met him. Then he thanked God and took courage for all that still awaited him in the imperial city. "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them" (Isa. xlii. 16).

## XVII

# A SERVANT OF THE CHURCH

ROM. xvi. 1, 2

1. I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea :

2. That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you : for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.

THE personal element of the previous section Rom. xvi. is here continued in reference mainly to the 1, 2. Apostle's readers. While he himself is about to journey to Jerusalem, he commends to the Church at Rome one who is coming there at once. This and the succeeding section afford a striking proof of the character and power of primitive Christianity.

I. *The Recommendation* (ver. 1).—Letters of commendation (2 Cor. iii. 1) between Christians in various churches were a primitive practice (Acts xviii. 27 ; 2 Cor. viii. 18-24 ; 3 John 9, 10), and were doubtless due to the fundamental principle of Christian fellowship. The believer who was a member of a church in one place might, and should be admitted to the communion of Christians else-

The  
Recom-  
mendation.

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xvi. 1, 2.** where. The custom was also pretty certainly the means of cementing union and communion between the various churches. It would be well if this practice were more fully observed in the present day, for when Christians change their place of residence they ought to take with them recommendations from the church with which they have been associated. If ministers and people were careful to see that this was done there would be fewer lapses from membership, a very much larger increase in true association between churches and churches, and not least of all, a more thorough protection against unworthy profession. It ought to be made as difficult as possible to receive to church membership anyone coming from another locality without such "epistles of commendation."

**The Recommended.**

The description of Phœbe is interesting, even though very little is actually told us. The name itself was one of the names of the goddess, Diana, and this would suggest that she was a convert from heathenism, not a Jewess. She is described as "our sister," an expression of that relationship between believers which comes from their oneness in God Who is their Father. We are all "children of God through faith in Jesus Christ," and as such there is a true relation of brotherhood and sisterhood among those who belong to Christ. But Phœbe is further described as "a servant of the Church which is at Cenchrea." The place was the port of Corinth, some nine miles away from the city, and the word rendered "servant" might also be translated "deaconess," though it is hardly possible

## A Servant of the Church

that the term had a technical meaning so early as **Rom. xvi. 1, 2.** this date. That there were women and office-bearers afterwards is evident (1 Tim. iii. 8), and of course it is possible that the necessity was found as early as the time now in question. There was much that a woman alone could do for women, especially in view of the Eastern separation of the sexes.

II. *The Request* (ver. 2).—This Christian woman **The Request.** is commended to the Christians at Rome for admission to fellowship with them while she is residing in the city. They are also asked to assist her in whatever matter she might have need. Some business was taking her to Rome, and St Paul wishes that Phœbe may find herself surrounded with the life and love of Christ. They are asked to become her servants and to take her business to heart. This would mean willingness to spend time and effort on her behalf. Whatever the business was, and of this we know nothing, the special point is that our Christian life is intended to influence all our conduct, and to lead us to do our utmost to promote the interests of our fellow-believers. The wording of the Apostle's request is quite striking: "Receive her in the Lord, worthily of the saints." They were to do this in union with their Master, and in the spirit that should actuate those who belong to God. "As it becomes saints to receive a saint." This title for Christians is again to be observed; it was evidently a favourite with St Paul. He was deeply conscious of the fact that believers belong to God,

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xvi.** and are dedicated, consecrated to His possession  
**1, 2.** and service.

**The Reason.** III. *The Reason* (ver. 2).—The Apostle explains why in particular he wishes this kindness to be shown to Phœbe. “She hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.” The word “succourer” is most striking, especially as applied here to a woman. It properly means “patroness,” or “champion.” A patron was one who in the Greek States took care of a stranger and was responsible for him to the civil authorities. Phœbe is here spoken of as one who had in things spiritual assumed this position on behalf of many, and even for the Apostle himself. She had “stood by” many, and now the Christians in Rome were asked to “stand by” her. The word, when translated into spiritual realities, means to “take protective charge,” caring for interests as the patron did for those of his clients (see Greek of ch. xii. 8; 1 Thess. v. 12). All this seems to suggest that Phœbe must have been a person of position and influence, perhaps like one of the “honourable women” mentioned by St Luke (Acts xvii. 12).

And thus we have in brief yet vivid outline the story of this unknown Christian woman. She is (a) a sister; (b) a servant; (c) a succourer of many; and in a place like Cenchrea with its utter wickedness her testimony for Christ must have been exceptionally welcome. Nor can we overlook the beautiful introduction given of her by St Paul. He does not stint his praise, for he took



## A Servant of the Church

a pleasure in setting his fellow-believers before others in the most favourable light possible. **Rom. xvi. 1, 2.** Loving appreciation of others is altogether different from flattery. Christian courtesy could not be more delightfully presented than in these brief statements of St Paul.

Special attention seems to be necessary to the phrase, "worthily of the saints." The thought of "worthiness" is frequent in the New Testament, and implies the idea of the estimate, or valuation which God places upon His people. The various words rendered "worthy," "worthily," and "to count worthy," indicate a profound truth of the New Testament. Thus the faithful followers of God are described as those "of whom the world was not worthy" (Heb. xi. 38), and the faithful ones in Sardis are to walk with Christ "for they are worthy" (Rev. iii. 4; cf. ch. xvi. 6). Six times we find the adverb "worthily" mentioned, and when they are all put together they constitute a vivid and striking testimony to the profound truth of that spiritual valuation which God makes of His people.

Suggestions  
for Medita-  
tion.

On Living  
"Worthily"

1. "*Worthily of the Gospel*" (Phil. i. 27). The Philippian Christians are urged to let their manner of life be worthy of the Gospel of Christ. They were to live in the constant thought of the essential value of that Gospel, and not to allow anything to come in to detract from it, so far as they were concerned. How helpful it would be if we had a similar estimate of the Gospel and endeavoured to walk worthy of it.

—Of the  
Gospel.

## The Epistle to the Romans

Rom. xvi. 2. "*Worthily of the Lord*" (Col. i. 10). This is even more important, for we are to let our conduct prove that we value Jesus Christ to such an extent that we shall seek to anticipate His will in everything "unto all well-pleasing." The more thoroughly we realise the value of Jesus Christ the more keenly we shall endeavour to behave ourselves in a manner befitting our relation to him.

—Of the  
Vocation.

3. "*Worthily of the Vocation*" (Eph. iv. 1). The New Testament makes much of the fact and purpose of the Divine calling. It is at once high (Phil. iii. 14), holy (2 Tim. i. 9), heavenly (Heb. iii. 1), and we are expected to live, and behave, and serve in the constant thought of what membership in the Christian community really means and involves. The Apostle himself tells us (Eph. iv. 2, 3) what "*worthily*" really implies, and the more highly we estimate what the calling is the more carefully we shall frame our lives in accordance with it.

—Of the  
Saints.

4. "*Worthily of the Saints*" (Rom. xvi. 2). The distinctive character of a saint is separation from the world and its ways, and the consequent consecration of the life to God. In the midst of all that was earthly and sinful in the Christianity of Rome the little body of saints were living their lives, conscious of their position in the sight of God, and doing their utmost to live lives of dedicated service to their Redeemer and Lord. "*Worthily of the saints*" is a remarkable phrase, and shows what God thinks of his people. We ought to have the same high estimate of our

## A Servant of the Church

fellowship with one another in Him, and so to live, **Rom. xvi.**  
and so to serve others, as to show that we have a **I, 2.**  
high value for those for whom God has such regard.

5. "*Worthily of God*" (3 John 6). The refer- —Of God.  
ence here is to certain messengers who were  
travelling with the Gospel from place to place,  
and the Apostle says that it would be a "beautiful"  
thing to show them hospitality, and to send them  
forward "worthily of God." This suggests what  
God thinks of His messengers, those who had gone  
out "on behalf of the Name, taking nothing from  
the Gentiles" (3 John 7.) If we realise what God  
thinks of these workers in His vineyard we also  
shall feel our obligation to welcome such in order  
that we may be co-workers with the truth. In the  
Old Testament times the word was "Touch not  
Mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm," and  
this, in New Testament language, may be extended  
to mean that we are to take every opportunity of  
welcoming and helping those who are serving God  
in the Gospel.

6. "*Worthily of God*" (1 Thess. ii. 12). This —And again  
is yet another aspect of our relation to God and of God.  
concerns our daily walk. God is here depicted  
as having summoned us into His kingdom and  
glory, and in view of these wonderful pros-  
pects in the future we are to walk worthily of  
Him. This is only another way of saying  
with St Peter, "What manner of persons ought  
ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness"  
(2 Pet. iii. 11).

The more we ponder this wonderful word

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xvi. 1, 2.** "worthily," and enter into its depth and fulness of meaning, the more perfectly we shall understand and realise that Christian life which is depicted in the Apostle's prayer when he prays that God may "count us worthy of His calling" (2 Thess. i. 11).

## XVIII

# A GALAXY OF SAINTS

ROM. xvi. 3-16

3. Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus :

4. Who have for my life laid down their own necks : unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

5. Likewise *greet* the church that is in their house. Salute my well-beloved Epænetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ.

6. Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us.

7. Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

8. Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord.

9. Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved.

10. Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' *household*.

11. Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of the *household* of Narcissus, which are in the Lord.

12. Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord.

13. Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.

14. Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them.

15. Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them.

16. Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xvi. 3-16.** FROM his recommendation of Phœbe St Paul passes to greet a number of Christians in Rome. It is very striking that this catalogue of obscure Christians should be included in a letter intended eventually for the whole Christian Church. It also affords a remarkable picture of the heart of the great Apostle, and of the real condition of Christianity in his day. Those who have opportunity should study all these personal references under the guidance of Paley's *Horæ Paulinæ*, and Bishop Lightfoot's article (*Philippians*, p. 171), and they will thereby see the remarkable testimony afforded to the truth and genuineness of the Epistle. No forger could have dealt so fully and freely with personal matters without betraying himself.

If it be asked how the Apostle knew so many in a church where he had not worked, it may be remarked that Rome was the centre of the world, and there was a constant movement to and fro, so that in the course of over twenty years of service in various parts it would not be difficult for him to know some two dozen people there.

The entire section should be studied with all possible attention to details under the guidance of a good commentary and the descriptions noted and compared. The passage is full of important lessons for to-day.

**Life in the Church.**

I. *Life in the Church.*—We gain a very good idea from this section of various elements that made up the Christian Church of that day.

**Its Women.**

1. *The number of women mentioned in this list.*



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shows the honour and prominence placed upon womanhood by Christianity. The majority of names are those of women, and this is all the more striking when we recall the restrictions of social life at that time. While the Apostle elsewhere limits woman's sphere in the Church, the restriction is only associated with her essential nature and place. Within these wide limits there are abundant opportunities for her service, and the history of centuries shows that only in connection with the Gospel of Christ can woman realise her true nature and fulfil her highest mission. In our own day the ministry of womanhood is being greatly honoured both at home and abroad, and the more thoroughly woman enters into the essential spirit of the Gospel the more effective will be her life and work.

2. We also see the value of home life in relation to the Gospel by the various homes mentioned here. Its Home Life. What beautiful glimpses we have of the work of the Gospel in hallowing home life. We read of several churches in homes, especially that of Aquila and Priscilla (ver. 5). For two or three centuries Christians met in private houses because they were not allowed to assemble in large numbers, and even if they had been permitted, they possessed no suitable buildings. There seems little doubt that these informal gatherings of small groups of believers had great influence in preserving the simplicity and purity of early Christianity. The story is told of a Roman official asking Justin Martyr where Christians assembled. Justin re-

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xvi. 3-16.** plied: "Where each one can and will. You believe, no doubt, that we all meet together in one place; but it is not so, for the God of the Christians is not shut up in a room, but, being invisible, He fills both heaven and earth, and is honoured everywhere by the faithful" (Quoted from Neander, by J. Brown, *Romans*, p. 592). We are accustomed to sing, "There's no place like home," but we are not always so accustomed to realise that it is only through the Gospel that home can become a reality. Aquila and Priscilla might not be able to preach, or take the lead in regard to Church matters, but they could allow their house to be used for the Gospel, and in quiet ways help forward the cause of Christ in a spirit of keen interest and genuine devotion.

**Its Service.** 3. The element of service is also another item of early Christian life. Aquila and Priscilla are spoken of as fellow-workers (ver. 3). Mary is said to have bestowed "much labour" (ver. 6); Persis "laboured much" (ver. 12). The Gospel inevitably expresses itself in practical work for God. In addition to this we may realise how even ordinary work can become hallowed and uplifted by the Gospel. We do not for a moment suppose that the tent-making of Priscilla, Aquila, and St Paul suffered by their profession of Christianity; on the contrary, the humblest and the most (so-called) secular work becomes ennobled by the reception of the Gospel.

**Its Suffering.** 4. The experience of suffering must not be omitted from this record of the life of the Church.

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The words of the Apostle in regard to Aquila and Priscilla are very striking, whatever they mean: **Rom. xvi. 3-16.**

"Who for my life laid down their own necks."

This must mean that they exposed their lives to some great danger for the purpose of protecting him. It made so deep an impression on him that he could not forget it, whatever it was (Acts xviii. 6, 12-17; 1 Cor. xv. 32; 2 Cor. i. 8). It is pretty certain that a long time had elapsed since the occurrence, and yet the Apostle's gratitude was as true as ever: "To whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles." Aquila and Priscilla served the whole Church in protecting the life of so valuable a servant of God. In the same way the Apostle calls Andronicus and Junius "his fellow-prisoners," referring doubtless to some imprisonment in which they all suffered for Christ. The early Christians were not long without the experience of suffering. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. iii. 12).

II. Variety in the Church.—How manifold is the expression of the Christian graces as here recorded. Some of the names are associated with activity. Their efforts were strenuous and persistent as they laboured for Christ in the Gospel. Others were associated with courage. They did not hesitate to confront danger for the cause of Christ. This variety is seen both among the women and the men. There was opportunity for all. The women mentioned here are evidently of very different types, and as we look at the

Variety in  
the Church.

## The Epistle to the Romans

Rom. xvi. names of Phœbe, Priscilla, Junia, Mary, Tryphena, 3-16. Tryphosa and Persis, we are struck with the variety of their life and service. So also with regard to men; Aquila, Andronicus, Urbanus, and others, expressed their Christianity in appropriate ways. Other Christians seem to have been noted for their beauty of character. Such terms as "approved" and "beloved" indicate this very plainly. All these features illustrate what St Peter calls "the many-coloured grace of God" (1 Pet. iv. 10), and we ought to rejoice in the infinite possibilities of the expression of Divine grace in Christ.

Unity in the Church.

III. Unity in the Church.—And yet amid all this variety there is the most remarkable oneness, because there was one bond which united them all; the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour, Master, and Friend. It is impossible to say too much about this twofold idea of variety amid the unity, and unity amid the variety. The grace of God comes along the line of individual temperament and circumstance, and yet it is the one grace of God throughout, coming from the one Saviour, and ministered by the one Spirit. The unity of the Christian Church has never been, and can never be, a unity which means unanimity of opinion, or uniformity in modes of worship, still less, a unit of organisation. It is something far different and infinitely more glorious than any of these things could be. It is a "unity of the Spirit" in the "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all" (Eph. iv. 5, 6).

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IV. Honour in the Church.—Here are people **Rom. xvi. 3-16.** unknown to men, but known to Christ. A great many of them were doubtless slaves, and yet side by side are some of the most distinguished names in the metropolis. The great city of Rome knew nothing at all of most of these people, but in the sight of God they were "saints." It is encouraging to think that no one is too insignificant to be remembered in the Book of Life. "A book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His Name. And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels" (Mal. iii. 16, 17).

V. Recognition in the Church.—How beautifully the Apostle describes these various Christians. Let us ponder some of his words. "Epænetus, my beloved, who is the firstfruits of Asia unto Christ" (ver. 5). Andronicus and Junius are said to be "of note among the Apostles" (ver. 7), and were in Christ before St Paul himself. They must have belonged to the early Church in Jerusalem, and as such were of special interest to the Apostle whose conversion came later than theirs. Amplias is "my beloved in the Lord" (ver. 8). Apelles is "approved" (ver. 10). Rufus is "chosen" (ver. 13); perhaps he is to be identified with the Rufus of Mark xv. 21, and the reference to "his mother and mine" is very touching: the mother of Rufus by birth; the mother of St Paul by Christian love (ver. 13). No one seems to have been forgotten by the Apostle.

Honour in the Church.

Recognition in the Church.

## The Epistle to the Romans

Rom. xvi.  
3-16.

Humility in  
the Church.

VI. Humility in the Church.—Nearly all the names mentioned here are those of humble helpers rather than leaders. We do not know of anything marvellous or magnificent that they performed, but we are reminded in almost every verse of their subordinate, quiet, simple service for the Master. As a modern teacher has well remarked:—

“The Church of God is overrun with captains. She is in great need of a few more privates. A few rivers run into the sea, but a far larger number run into other rivers. We cannot all be pioneers, but we can all be helpers, and no man is fitted to go in the front until he has learned well how to go second” (A. B. Simpson, *Romans*, p. 291).

The Master's words are “To every man his work,” and if only we realise that each has his proper place and sphere, and then seek to glorify God therein, the work of the Church will go forward increasingly to the glory of God and the salvation of man.

Fellowship  
in the  
Church.

VII. Fellowship in the Church.—How personal and affectionate are these greetings. What a reality and breadth marked St Paul's relationships. Although a profound thinker and a great leader, he is even still greater in the realm of the affections. Neither official position nor intellectual power dried up the streams of his intense devotion and self-sacrificing love. He carries in his heart this list of the saints, and with accurate memory, distinguishing detail, and intense affection, he greets them all. It must have been a precious



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thing to feel the love of this Greatheart. The Rom. xvi. Apostle has been beautifully described as “a 3-16. distributing centre of holy affection.”

Blest be the tie that binds  
Our hearts in Christian love ;  
The fellowship of kindred minds  
Is like to that above.

But the love of St Paul as here depicted was only an instance of that general mutual love that characterised the whole Church, for the greetings close with the general exhortation to “salute one another,” and a message of salutation from “all the Churches of Christ” (ver. 16). The salutation by kissing was the ordinary way of expressing affection in these countries, just as shaking hands is with us to-day, and we find similar exhortations elsewhere (1 Cor. xvi. 20 ; 2 Cor. xiii. 12 ; 1 Thess. v. 26 ; 1 Pet. v. 14). It was probably due to this simple, natural, and innocent custom among Christians that the baseless charges of the heathen took their rise, and it is not at all unlikely that owing to these slanders and calumnies the practice had to be discontinued. But whatever may be the precise mode of expression the reality and power of Christian love and fellowship remain unimpaired.

As we again look over this truly wonderful passage and try to extract from it its special meaning and message for our own hearts, we can hardly help noticing two great outstanding truths.

1. The Glory of the Gospel. Few passages in

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tion.

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Rom. xvi. the New Testament reveal more hidden secrets  
3-16. of early Christianity than this apparently un-  
The Glory important list of names. (a) How the Gospel  
of the penetrates. Here we find men and women of  
Gospel. all sorts led to Christ and used in His service  
in the great metropolis:—

“See, in the very details of these short salutations, by what humble instruments, and yet how extensively, the Gospel had established itself in so short a time, in the mighty city of Rome. No Apostle had set his foot there, yet behold with wonder what progress had already been made by the Word of God, solely through the labours of artisans, merchants, women, slaves, and freedmen, who happened to be in Rome” (Gaussen, “*Theopneustia*,” p. 323).

Could anything be more striking as a testimony to that Gospel which the Apostle has already described as “the power of God unto salvation”? (b) How the Gospel unites. Here are masters and slaves, all one in Christ Jesus. We are sometimes inclined to feel surprised that the New Testament does not condemn slavery, especially as we know that the Gospel is absolutely opposed to this deplorable institution. The explanation lies in the fact that in the reception of the Gospel there came into the lives of masters and slaves such a new spirit and power as enabled each to realise true brotherhood in Christ, even amidst the social conditions of that day. The story of Philemon and Onesimus is a striking illustration of what must have happened continually

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on every hand. The Gospel is intended to deal **Rom. xvi.** separately with the rich and with the poor, and **3-16.** at the same time to unite both in one common fellowship in Christ Jesus. There is nothing on earth that tends to unite men and classes like the Gospel of peace. *(c) How the Gospel dignifies.* Life and labour become uplifted and transformed in proportion as the Gospel enters and dominates the soul. Aquila and Priscilla may be tent-makers, but they can do their work to the glory of God. William Carey can be a cobbler, and yet be the means of witnessing for Christ long before he is the great missionary of India.

“Teach me, my God and King,  
In all things Thee to see,  
And what I do in anything,  
To do it unto Thee.

A servant with this clause  
Makes drudgery divine;  
Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws  
Makes that and the action fine.”

*(d) How the Gospel enables.* The section is full of references to activity, to courage, to suffering, to character, and everything is due to the controlling and transforming power of the Gospel. Aquila and Priscilla little knew what was going to happen when they received the Apostle Paul into their house (Acts xviii. 1-3). Not only did it lead to their own conversion, but through them to the conversion of Apollos, the life-long friendship of St Paul, and the entire revolution of all their interests. The Gospel comes into our life just as we are and where we are,

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Rom. xvi. and by its mighty power gives victory over all circumstances, makes us "more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

The Secret  
of the  
Gospel.

2. The Secret of the Gospel. We shall fail entirely to appreciate the true meaning of this passage if we overlook one small but significant part of the Apostle's statement. Ten times in sixteen verses he uses the little word "in," as expressive of the source and secret of all that he has described. "In the Lord" (ver. 2); "in Christ" (ver. 7). Whether for life, or brotherhood, or service, union with the Lord is the guarantee of true Christianity. There are other bonds of union mentioned in this passage, such as suffering, service, and gratitude, but they are all included and swallowed up in this supreme thought that St Paul and his fellow-believers in Rome were all "in Christ," or "in the Lord." It is union with Him Who died and rose again, and is now alive for evermore, that alone can produce holiness of heart or earnestness of life. And while the Apostle is bold to say, "I can do all things," he is quick to add, "in Him Who is strengthening me" (Phil. iv. 13). We must never allow ourselves to forget for a single moment that our salvation, our holiness, our courage, our endurance, our service, are only possible as we are "in Christ"; "in the Lord."

## XIX

# A LAST LOOK OUTWARD

### ROM. xvi. 17-24

17. Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned ; and avoid them.

18. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly ; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

19. For your obedience is come abroad unto all *men*. I am glad therefore on your behalf : but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.

20. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. Amen.

21. Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you:

22. I Tertius, who wrote *this* epistle, salute you in the Lord.

23. Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother.

24. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

THE Apostle is drawing to a close, but he has still **Rom. xvi.** several things of prime importance to say. There **17-24.** are dangers and difficulties to which he must refer. Out of the fulness of his heart he has sent them affectionate greetings. All the while he is conscious that there were adverse influences at work in men

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xvi. 17-24.** of a very different attitude to Christ and His Gospel, and he feels it imperative to sound this warning note before he closes.

**An Urgent Appeal.**

I. *An Urgent Appeal* (ver. 17).—"Now I beseech you, brethren." A tone of entreaty, not of command. The Apostle never uses the word signifying "order," or "command." He invariably carried out his own principle: "Not that we have lordship over your faith, but are helpers of your joy" (2 Cor. i. 24). The very fact that he appeals to them in this earnest loving way is a proof of the great necessity of his words.

**A Serious Trouble.**

II. *A Serious Trouble* (ver. 17).—"Them which cause divisions and offences." The "divisions" represent ecclesiastical parties or factions. The "offences" were the stumbling-blocks, or occasions of falling produced by the factions; one was ecclesiastical, the other moral. It seems pretty clear that the reference is to the Judaisers who were always following the Apostle and doing their utmost to oppose him and his Gospel (Phil. iii. 2; Tit. i. 10, 11). They were even then at work, and from the Epistle to the Philippians we see clearly that they were in Rome five years afterwards. Factions in the Church almost inevitably tend to moral troubles and disaster. In more than one sense, "Unity is strength."

**A Pressing Duty.**

III. *A Pressing Duty* (ver. 17).—"Mark them . . . and turn away from them." This means that the enemy was to be observed and avoided. The Roman Christians were to keep an eye on them, and, as the phrase is, "give them a wide berth."



## A Last Look Outward

Enemies of this kind would probably prosecute their intentions in secret at first, and much trouble might easily accrue before any outward danger was seen. It was therefore essential that the danger should be noted in its earliest possible stages in order that every precaution might be taken later on to defeat their machinations. Chrysostom notes that the Apostle does not advise any debate with these men. Disputes and discussions would be ineffective and powerless, if not harmful, and the truest wisdom was to be found in utter avoidance.

IV. A Simple Test (ver. 17).—"Contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned." This was the one simple yet adequate way of testing the reality of these teachers. The Roman Christians had learned the doctrine of Jesus Christ in all its simplicity and purity, and as one of the immediate effects of that doctrine was to bind together in heart and soul all who belonged to Christ, it was evident that any teaching which caused division and trouble could not possibly be from God. It is well for us to have some such simple powerful means of putting to a test the things we hear from time to time. Are they in accordance with the truth which we have learned and received? If they are, let us accept them; if they are not, let us beware of them.

V. A Solemn Warning (ver. 18).—In the plainest possible language St Paul says that these false teachers are serving their own appetites only, and are leading astray the immature and guileless Christians. "They that are such serve not our

Rom. xvi.  
17-24.

A Simple  
Test.

A Solemn  
Warning.

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xvi.** Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly." False  
**17-24.** doctrine and vile living tend to go together, as we have already seen (ch. i. 21-25). These men were bold, hypocritical, and sensual, and were, in fact, making a living by false teaching. No thought of the glory of our Lord entered into the minds of these men. All that they considered was their own advantage and profit. Their methods, too, were admirably adapted to gain their ends. By good words and fair speeches they deceived the hearts of the simple. The "simple" are the innocent; those who are genuinely sincere, without possessing any special power of intellect or spiritual perception. By their benign speech and their beautiful benedictions they were liable to beguile and capture those who were not capable of distinguishing between the outward attractiveness and essential banefulness of the teaching. By the unwary and guileless such attractive utterances could not but be received as impressive and convincing. "How could they talk so seraphically if not saints?" (Stifler). Just at this point lay the deadliness of the danger.

It is very significant that all through the New Testament times there was this constant fear of intellectual and moral danger and disaster. Men were ready to take advantage of the Gospel for the sake of gain. By working on tender consciences and trading on fears, they easily captured and led astray simple, unwary souls. Nearly every section of the Epistles has something to say against these men. It is of such that St Paul speaks when he

## A Last Look Outward

describes them in the plainest of terms, "Whose god is their belly" (Phil. iii. 18, 19). The same class of false teachers is doubtless in view when reference is made to those who subvert houses and teach things which they ought not for filthy lucre's sake (Tit. i. 10, 11). It is also more than probable that they were referred to in connection with leading captive silly women (2 Tim. iii. 6). St Peter is equally clear about men of this type, who "beguile unstable souls," "sporting themselves with their own deceivings, while feasting, and speaking great swelling words of vanity" (2 Pet. ii. 13-19). Doubtless, too, Jude is warning against the same men when he refers to those who "ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward" (vers. 11-16). Nor has the Christian Church been without such dangers through the centuries since the Apostles' time. There are always those who are prepared to "turn the grace of God into lasciviousness," and trade upon the ignorance of simple, pious, earnest souls for the sake of financial and immoral gains.

VI. *A Splendid Testimony* (ver. 19).—"For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf." The Apostle here expresses his conviction that these false teachers cannot deceive the Christians at Rome, for their obedience is well known. They had so grown in grace as to have made for themselves a name among the Churches of Christ, and in all this St Paul rejoices. He had spoken of their faith as known throughout the world (ch. i. 8). And it is as though he now remarked that his warning was

Rom. xvi.  
17-24.

A Splendid  
Testimony.

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xvi.** due to the fact that the knowledge of their Christian  
**17-24.** life having already spread far and wide, the false teachers would not fail to hear of the Christians in Rome, and would therefore do their utmost to subvert them as they had others elsewhere.

**An Earnest  
Desire.**

VII. An Earnest Desire (ver. 19).—"But yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil." Although their obedience is well known, the Apostle with his usual delicate combination of confidence and warning, wants even them to be wise concerning good, and simple-minded concerning evil. Just as he warns he expresses his confidence in them first of all. They were not to be wise with regard to evil and simple with regard to good. This is the maxim of the world, but there is no need to practise evil in order to become wise in it. Purity of life which springs from purity of faith is the best possible safeguard against evil. "Be deep in the wisdom of humble faith; be contented to be unacquainted with a wisdom which at its root is evil" (Bishop Moule). Our Lord spoke in similar terms when He said to His disciples that they were to unite the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness (same word as rendered "simple") of the dove (Matt. x. 16).

"Human wisdom seeks to guard itself by a thorough knowledge of the world, and of all evil ways. This is not the wisdom that cometh down from above, but earthly, natural, devilish. The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceful, gentle, yielding, full of mercy and good fruits, uncontentious and unfeigned. It needs not to cultivate acquaintance with evil; it knows good in Christ, it is satisfied, and adores. It

## A Last Look Outward

hears and loves the Shepherd's voice : a stranger's voice it knows not, and will not follow. And this, as it suits the simplest soul brought to the knowledge of God, it may be to-day, so it alone becomes the wisest, because it alone glorifies the Lord, as indeed it is the only path of safety for us, being such as we are, and in such a world" (W. Kelly, *Romans*, p. 280). Rom. xvi.  
17-24.

The one question for all believers is whether a thing is right. If it is not, then we must get as far away from it as possible. Ability may easily become weakness in regard to evil. Our supreme need and our perfect safeguard is simplicity. "Darkness cannot reveal darkness" (Stifler).

VII. A Cheering Promise (ver. 20).—"The God of peace will bruise Satan under your feet shortly." A Cheering  
Promise.  
From the visible enemy the Apostle turns to the invisible foe and to the assurance of victory over him. Thus he encourages them to faithfulness by this promise of conquest. The reference is obviously to the story in Genesis (ch. iii. 15), and this seems to be the only place in the New Testament where it is mentioned. The word "shortly" does not mean "soon," but "swiftly." He did not mean them to understand that the victory might come at once, but that when God commenced to work, His conquest of Satan would be short and sharp. "Paul means not that the victory will be near, but that it will be speedily gained when once the conquest is begun. When the believer fights with the armour of God the conflict is never long" (Godet). It is also of interest to observe how the human and the Divine elements are blended in the promise that



## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xvi.** God shall bruise Satan, and yet that it shall come to pass "under our feet." God is the source of all power and grace, but we appropriate it and make it our own for use. The title, "the God of peace," should also be noted, especially as we had it in a different connection in the former chapter (xv. 33). God as the God of peace secures peace for us by overcoming Satan, and thus safeguarding us against his followers.

**A Heartfelt Prayer.**

**IX. A Heartfelt Prayer (ver. 20).**—"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." Thus with the benediction this solemn section closes, and in it is a renewed assurance of Divine "grace" which will issue in victory over all their foes.

**A Renewed Greeting.**

**X. A Renewed Greeting (vers. 21-24).**—The warning over, St Paul takes up again his loving salutations. The contrast is striking, as we contemplate the insertion of the solemn warning between two sections of affectionate greeting. These salutations are from the Apostle's companions as he wrote his letter. It is more than probable that the Epistle was read out first at Corinth where it was written, and that these greetings from the Church were then added. Timothy is of course well known as the Apostle's "fellow-worker" (ver. 21), his beloved son in the faith. The three names that follow, Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, are spoken of as St Paul's own kinsmen (ver. 21), evidently showing (as in vers. 7, 11) that he had relatives united with him in the faith of Christ. The amanuensis of the Epistle, Tertius, then gives his own greeting (ver. 22), and, last of all, mention



## A Last Look Outward

is made of three notable men, Gaius, Erastus, and Quartus (ver. 23). Gaius was the host of the Apostle and of the entire Church. The gatherings were doubtless held at his house. Erastus was none other than the treasurer of the city of Corinth, an important personage, one of the few "noble" among the saints in Corinth. Quartus is not "a" brother, but "the" brother, doubtless known to the Christians in Rome, and therefore able to be described in this way. How delightfully discriminating are these greetings from the Apostle's companions. The brotherliness and genuine appreciation are another proof both of the writer's large heart and also of the authenticity of his Epistle. The Revised Version omits the benediction in ver. 24, but some commentators (like Meyer) retain it. If it is to be accepted as genuine, we must consider it as the personal and fraternal benediction, just as that at ver. 20 was the official benediction, closing the Epistle.

Dangers similar to those mentioned here still threaten the Christian Church. The pathway of the Gospel through the centuries is strewn with intellectual and moral disasters, and we therefore do well to concentrate attention and emphasise duty in the light of these solemn words.

1. The Sensitiveness of Love. Coming after the large-hearted and abundantly affectionate greetings of the earlier section, we can well understand the Apostle's concern in the face of these dangers. The very joy he felt in the faith and life of these Roman Christians made the thought of possible

Suggestions  
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The  
Warning.

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xvi.** disaster still more terrible. His devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ, "our Lord Christ" (ver. 18) was an additional and weightier reason for his intense feeling against these enemies of the Cross of Christ. It is no narrowness to feel the pressure of danger and to warn against it. It is an utterly false charity to allow men of erroneous doctrine, charming speech, and selfish motive to make havoc of the Church of God. There is nothing in this world more sensitive than true love between man and wife, or friend and friend. Much more, therefore, will the love of Christ, when it fills the heart, possess the soul with a holy sensitiveness in the face of evil.

The  
Safeguard.

2. The Safeguard of Truth. The emphasis on knowledge of the truth in this section is particularly weighty. The errors were "contrary" to the doctrine (ver. 17). The danger was due to the deception of smooth and fair speaking (ver. 18), and for this reason the Apostle wishes them to have the true spiritual wisdom (ver. 19). It is one of the most impressive thoughts connected with the New Testament that spiritual perception is one of the marks of a ripe, mature Christianity. The young Christian is unable to distinguish things that differ, but the growing saint is able to understand, and in the light of spiritual experience is able to discern good and evil (Phil. i. 9, 10), and to distinguish between the beautiful and the base (Heb. v. 14). All this calls for a constant application of mind, heart, conscience, and will to the truth of God as revealed in His Word. The

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Christian who makes Bible study and meditation his daily portion and duty will never lack that spiritual enlightenment which will enable him to shrink from the first appearance of error and follow that which is good. The illuminated heart is able almost instinctively to say two things: "We are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Cor. ii. 11); "We have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. ii. 16). Rom. xvi. 17-24.

3. The Stronghold of Grace. The Apostle leads his readers to contemplate "the God of peace" and "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." Thus an assurance of promise and prayer is expressed in connection with the danger from these false teachers. He would have them know that the God of peace and the grace of Christ would be their constant and sufficient shield from the assaults made upon them through false doctrine and unholy life. They "that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits" (Dan. xi. 32). The God of truth is the God of grace, and the reason why we say "Truth is mighty" is because behind it is the personal revelation of Him Who is the truth. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," and the soul that occupies itself with God in fellowship through His Word, and by His Spirit, will find himself surrounded by a complete safeguard in the armour of God. The Stronghold.

## XX

### A LAST LOOK UPWARD

#### ROM. xvi. 25-27

25. Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,

26. But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith :

27. To God only wise, *be* glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.

Rom. xvi. 25-27. At length the end of the Epistle is near. St Paul has now done his utmost by letter, but as he closes he remembers that God alone can establish the Roman Christians in the faith. And so, as Godet remarks, we have in these verses "the look upwards." It is not usual for the Apostle to end an Epistle with a doxology, though there are doxologies in several of his Epistles. The normal method of closing his writing was seen in the benediction of verse 20, but the salutations (vers. 21-24) and this closing doxology are quite characteristic of his feelings at the time and under the circumstances of this Epistle. The doxology is very rich, deep, and full, and it is noteworthy for gathering up

## A Last Look Upward

some of the fundamental thoughts of the Epistle, **Rom. xvi.** particularly those found in the opening section **25-27.** (ch. i. 1-17). Indeed, a close study of these two parts reveals some quite striking points of agreement and contrast. Thus we have in the opening and closing sections references to Scriptures (ch. i. 2), our Lord Jesus Christ (ch. i. 3), the obedience of faith (ch. i. 5), the Gospel (ch. i. 15, 16), and revelation (ch. i. 17). Not that the subjects are all and wholly identical; on the contrary, as we shall see, there are both comparisons and contrasts. But the remarkable repetition at the opening and close of the Epistle, even with differences of the same words and ideas, deserves careful attention.

L. Power (ver. 25).—"Now to Him that is of Power power to stablish you." It was the desire and aim of the Apostle in the prospect of his visit to Rome to establish them by the impartation of some spiritual gift (ch. i. 11), and the entire Epistle was meanwhile intended for the same purpose. No doubt his teaching would do much, but after all he is conscious, and he wishes them to realise, that strength comes from God. A similar thought is found in his address to the elders at Miletus (Acts xx. 31, 32). He is naturally anxious that all the Christians in Rome should be included among those of whom he can speak as "we who are strong" (ch. xv. 1). In the face of the dangerous and deadly foes who were liable to enter into the Church, and also in view of the many and varied needs of their Christian profession and service, the supreme necessity for their life was strength.

## The Epistle to the Romans

Rom. xvi.  
25-27.

Provision.

—In the  
Gospel.

II. Provision (vers. 25, 26).—Twice, or perhaps three times, the Apostle uses the phrase “according to,” as indicating the provision made by God for this strength and establishment of the Christian life.

1. The first part of the provision was found in the Gospel proclaimed by the Apostle—“according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ.” We have already seen another reference to “my Gospel” (ch. ii. 16; cf. 2 Tim. ii. 8). And similarly the Apostle speaks elsewhere of “our Gospel” (2 Cor. iv. 3; 1 Thess. i. 5). This must mean the particular message which was characteristic of the Apostle’s ministry, the free, complete, and universal Gospel of the righteousness and grace of God in Christ. This is further defined as “the preaching of Jesus Christ,” which doubtless means that Jesus Christ was the constant theme and predominant subject of his message. We can see this in every Epistle that he wrote, and in particular in his own great statement of the Gospel, as it had been delivered to him and was being proclaimed far and wide (1 Cor. xv. 1-4). This is the first element of the great provision for Christian steadfastness. Power in daily life comes from the Gospel of which Jesus Christ in His Divine Person and Work is the substance and theme. The more this Gospel enters into hearts and lives, the more fully will power and strength be experienced.

—In Union  
of Jew and  
Gentile.

2. But the Apostle takes another step in speaking of the provision for Christian strength and firmness by showing that there is a further provision made by God—“According to the revelation of the .



## A Last Look Upward

mystery, which was kept secret since the world began; but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God." Here again we have the Pauline word "mystery," which, as elsewhere (ch. xi. 25), invariably means something that was once secret but is now revealed. It should be carefully observed that "the revelation of the mystery" here mentioned was not that the Gospel was to be extended to the Gentiles, for this was no mystery at all, since it is clearly found in a number of passages in the Old Testament. The "mystery" was something that arose out of this extension to the Gentiles, namely, the union of Jew and Gentile on the same level as one body in Christ. This is the "mystery" of which nothing is said in the Old Testament. The first problem of the Apostle's life was to bring in the Gentiles, and this is the great theme of the Epistle to the Romans. But later on a second problem became acute, the question of the status of the Gentiles after they had been brought in. It is the latter with which the present statement is concerned, and it is spoken of as a "mystery" which had been "kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest." This shows that whatever is in view, it is something that had not been known in earlier ages, but was only revealed at the time that the Apostle was writing. This is made still more evident when the phrase, "the scriptures of the prophets," is properly rendered. There are no articles in the original, and the term is simply "prophetic writings." The

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**Rom. xvi. 25-27.** reference is not to the Old Testament prophets, but to the New, for, as we know, prophets as well as apostles were included in the gift of the exalted Christ (Eph. iv. 8-13). It was to the Apostle Paul in particular that this "mystery" was specially revealed (Eph. iii. 4-6). He does not elaborate this subject in the present Epistle, because it is the special message of that to the Ephesians, and those who would know what these verses really mean should read the latter Epistle immediately after studying this doxology. St Paul thus hints at the glorious thought that not only are Gentiles welcomed into the Christian Church on the same level of equality with Jews through simple faith, but that once they are in Christ they are to be united with the Jews as fellow-heirs of the same Body, both Jews and Gentiles forming the one Church of Christ. If only these truths are carefully observed there will be no difficulty whatever in understanding the Apostle's meaning, but if we interpret the passage of the Gospel and its extension to the Gentiles, we see at once how inappropriate and impossible it is in view of the full revelation of these latter truths in the Old Testament. When once we have entered by personal experience into the truths of Romans, we are then, and only then, ready for the still deeper truths of Ephesians. Romans shows how we come out of bondage into liberty; Ephesians continues the teaching by showing how we are raised up to the throne of God, and become "blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ."

## A Last Look Upward

III. Purpose (ver. 26).—The simple yet all-embracing object in what the Apostle had to say was “the obedience of faith.” Just as he opened (ch. i. 5), so he closes. This means the obedience which springs from faith; that which faith causes, produces, guarantees. Faith in the New Testament is far more than any mere intellectual acceptance of truth. It is truth expressed in life; “faith that worketh by love.” Obedience is the fruit of faith and shows itself in character and conduct. As the Anglican Article well teaches, Good works “do spring out necessarily of a true and lively faith; insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by the fruit.” Rom. xvi. 25-27.  
Purpose.

IV. Praise (ver. 27).—Everything is intended to lead up to this culminating point; the ascription of praise and glory to Him Who is “the only wise God.” And so the Apostle ends with the highest of all thoughts, “the glory of God.” (ch. iii. 23; v. 2). Praise.

“Thus this glorious epistle leaves us gazing into the endless succession of coming ages and listening to the song which throughout each successive age will rise with louder and sweeter note to Him Who, before the ages were, formed for us, whom He fore-saw in sin and ruin, His wondrous and costly purpose of salvation and life, Who throughout the successive ages of the earlier covenants carried His purpose towards and to its historic completion in Jesus of Nazareth, and Who now day by day carries forward the same purpose by His Spirit in the hearts of us His children until that day when we and Paul and the whole family of earth and heaven shall join in

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xvi. 25-27.** that anthem of praise whose notes from afar, as the weary pen of the Apostle falls from his hand, are already ringing in his ears" (Deet, *Romans*, p. 363).

**Suggestions for Meditation.** Let us pay special attention to the closing suggestions and hints here given by the Apostle for our spiritual life.

**Need.** 1. The Supreme Need (ver. 25). "Stablish you." In every age, under all circumstances, the Christian life should be one of spiritual consistency, for if there is firmness in the inner life there will be steadfastness in the outer conduct. A strong Christian is one who is saved, sanctified, and satisfied in Christ. His position as an established believer makes him at once happy, holy, and helpful. Weakness is perilous to the believer's own soul, and prejudicial to anything he endeavours to do for his Master. Strength, on the other hand, will give the heart and life confidence, comfort, and courage, and prove the means of usefulness on every hand. Let us, therefore, never fail to recall this last word of this important Epistle, the absolute necessity of strength and steadfastness in Christian living.

**Provision.** 2. The Sufficient Provision. Two references to God indicate this: "Him that is of power" (ver. 25), or "Him that is able," and "God only wise" (ver. 27). God is both able and willing to guarantee strength and grace. His power and wisdom are the source of our stability. Again and again the Apostle dwells with loving confidence upon the ability of God (ch. iv. 21; xi. 23; xiv. 4; Eph. iii. 20; cf. Jude 24). Under all

## A Last Look Upward

circumstances, in every emergency, amid every weakness, surrounded by the most pressing problems, let us take to our hearts these two inspiring truths: "God is able"; "God is wise." Resting on Divine wisdom and Divine power we shall be "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." Rom. xvi. 25-27.

3. The Simple Method (ver. 25). "According to my gospel." This is how God works to provide us with power. By means of the Gospel of Jesus Christ we become partakers of the Divine "ability" and "wisdom" which lead to personal steadfastness. Power through truth is the prime secret of Christian living. While we occupy our minds with "Him that is of power" we know that He works through that Gospel which is "the power of God." The more fully, therefore, we enter into the personal experience of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and allow it to dominate our lives, the more steadfast shall we become, as Christ is increasingly realised as "the power of God," and "the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. i. 24). Method.

4. The Sublime Object (ver. 27). "To God . . . be glory through Jesus Christ for ever." This is the culminating point of the Christian life. The close of the Epistle suggests the course of Christian experience. God is to be glorified by our daily living, and if only we manifest that steadfastness which the Apostle desires, there can be no doubt that it will glorify God as perhaps nothing else can do. Men are impressed by strength, and when they realise that "our help cometh from the Lord"

## The Epistle to the Romans

**Rom. xvi.** they too will be led to enter into personal  
**25-27.** relations with Him through the everlasting Gospel.  
Day by day, hour by hour, and even moment by  
moment, may we never forget the supreme purpose  
of everything in life: "that God may be all  
in all."



## XXI

### A REVIEW

#### I. THE APOSTLE HIMSELF

It is impossible to leave this important Epistle **A Review.** without endeavouring to gather up some of the main threads of thought running through it. We are only too apt to lose sight of these in the abundance of suggestive detail, and we therefore fail to "see the wood for the trees." Amid very much that is in it from beginning to end it may be useful to consider four leading thoughts: what it reveals of St Paul, of his Writing, of his Message, of his Master. And as we endeavour to make ourselves acquainted with the teaching of the Epistle along these lines we shall see its direct and constant application on our own lives.

Indirectly, but very really, the Epistle gives a **The Apostle** revelation of St Paul, and the various aspects of **Himself.** his character are worthy of the closest attention.

I. *His Courtesy.*—The Church in Rome was **His** unknown to him, and we can see his anxiety not **Courtesy.** to appear to intrude upon what might be considered an unnecessary sphere of work. Even though he is conscious of being the Apostle to the Gentiles, and as such would have a perfect right to include

## The Epistle to the Romans

**A Review.** Rome within the purview of his operations, he goes out of his way first to explain the reasons of the long delay in coming to them, and then to express his conviction that when he should arrive, it would be to receive, as much as to bestow blessing. In all this the fine gentlemanliness and courtesy of the Apostle shines out, and gives us a model of how to approach those who may be rightly regarded as quite as capable of entering into spiritual experiences as ourselves. Although the Apostle wrote them this letter, he was persuaded that it was really unnecessary for him to say very much, in the light of their possession of a real Christian experience of life and work (ch. xv. 14). And he is sure that when he comes to them it will be in the fulness of the blessing of Christ and with mutual advantage (ch. xv. 24, 29).

**His  
Tenderness.**

II. *His Tenderness.*—The vigour, and sometimes the rigour, of the Apostle's thought might easily blind us to the fact that he was one of the most tender-hearted and considerate of men. We see this in his references to his fellow-countrymen, the Jews (ch. ix. 1-5), for in spite of the severity with which he was compelled to deal with their rejection of Christ, his heart overflowed in love and sympathy towards them, as he contemplated their profound spiritual loss in severance from the Messiah. Again, when he is dealing with the great question of conscience (ch. xiv. 1-xv. 7), his innate thoughtfulness and tenderness are manifest in almost every verse. He shrinks from anything that would cause a brother to stumble, and is especially concerned

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lest by a mere piece of food anyone should be destroyed for whom Christ died (ch. xiv. 15). Once again we can see his deep feeling as he refers to his projected visit to Jerusalem. He longs that his work there may be acceptable to the saints, and that it may be the means of bringing together the two great sections of the Christian Church. It is not often that we find a man of such force of character so exquisitely tender, thoughtful, and sympathetic in his dealings with others. Nothing was too small for the Apostle's thought if only thereby a fellow-Christian's feelings might be considered and his life helped. **A Review.**

III. *His Courage*.—This is the other side of **His Courage**. Paul's character. He is face to face with resolute, and sometimes even virulent opposition, and yet he never dreams of modifying his Gospel in the slightest degree. In the face of all difficulties he goes straight ahead with his presentation of the truth as he received it. Jews might oppose, and Gentiles might scorn, but he is perfectly indifferent. He has a message from God, and come what may, he will deliver it everywhere. This unflinching courage is one of the finest characteristics of the Christian life. Like one of a still older day, the Apostle was ready to say in the prosecution of his task, "If I perish, I perish."

IV. *His Ability*.—It is in this Epistle in **His Ability**. particular that we are made conscious of the intellectual power of St Paul. His treatment of the Gospel is marked by a wonderfully wide range of thought, as well as a profound depth. There is

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**A Review.** a constant and irresistible logic about his presentation. He goes from point to point without any essential digression. He knows both his own mind, and also the truth that he has to present, and step by step from the opening words to the close of the doctrinal discussion we are impressed with the marvellous force, range and profundity of his teaching.

**His  
Spirituality.**

V. *His Spirituality.*—Intellectual teaching alone easily becomes dry, abstract, and remote from ordinary life. It must be permeated with spirituality if it is to become really powerful. This is the special feature of the Apostle's teaching, as seen in this and other Epistles. His life came out of his faith, and his faith expressed itself in life. As we read the great chapter on the power of the Holy Spirit over the flesh as the guarantee of holiness (ch. viii.), we are particularly conscious of the blending of thought and experience, of truth and spirituality. Phillips Brooks has defined preaching as "truth through personality," and this is pre-eminently illustrated by the Apostle Paul. Truth alone may easily be uninteresting and even hard, while personality alone might as easily be weak and sentimental, but when truth gives force to personality and personality gives warmth and life to truth, we have the perfect blend which recommends both. So in this Epistle we have a combination of profound intellectual ability and equally profound spirituality, and the consequence is that the teaching glows with life and recommends itself by its own inherent fragrance

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and charm. The Apostle's wonderful combination of thought for lowly things and sympathy with a narrow outlook, together with outstanding intellectual force and exceptional spirituality, show the essential Christianity of his character. **A Review.**

VI. *His Fairness.*—Although a man of strong convictions and intense feelings, it is remarkable how true he holds the balance between opposing views. There are no Jewish, or anti-Jewish prejudices, notwithstanding the personal attacks made on him and his Gospel by his Jewish contemporaries. In the same way the treatment of the strong and the weak exhibits a striking fairness, which is all the more noteworthy because the Apostle quite clearly associates himself with the strong (ch. xv. 1), and realises that the weakness to which he refers is no essential part of true Christianity. This attitude of fairness and balanced outlook commends the Apostle's teaching to all who desire to look at truth from different stand-points, and it gives us confidence in his convictions as we contemplate his wise and strong grasp of the matters in dispute. **His Fairness.**

VII. *His Earnestness.*—This feature of his character is seen at almost every stage. In the opening words (ch. i. 8-15) we are made conscious of his intense desire to reach Rome and to preach the Gospel in the great metropolis. His discussion of the Gospel is marked by the same earnestness, as he elaborates point by point the truth for which he has lived. When, too, he has to speak of his countrymen, the Jews, we observe at every stage **His Earnestness.**

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**A Review.** of his discussion that he is keenly alive to their spiritual loss in the rejection of Christ, and this stirs his earnestness to the highest point. It is just the same when he is led to speak of the great work of his life as the Apostle to the Gentiles. His overmastering thought is the proclamation of the Gospel everywhere, and his supreme ambition is to make Christ known to all those who had never heard of Him (ch. xv. 18-21). As we contemplate this dominating earnestness of the great Apostle we cannot help feeling rebuked by our own puny efforts at soul-winning, and our own failure to respond to the call of the Gospel of Christ. If Simeon standing before the portrait of Henry Martyn was ever reminded to "Be in earnest," much more ought the consideration of an Epistle like this to stir our hearts to be in earnest "in season and out of season" on behalf of our Master and His work.

### **His Patriotism.**

VIII. *His Patriotism.*—The fact that the Apostle had become a Christian did not make him any the less a Jew. On the contrary, he had an intensity of feeling for his fellow-countrymen which he never possessed in his unconverted days. The Christian should always be the truest patriot because of his possession of that Gospel which alone can make a country righteous, powerful, and strong. The strong feeling on behalf of the Jews is seen not only in the great section which deals with this problem (ch. ix.-xi.), but also in those references to the journey to Jerusalem which, as we know, had such a definite bearing on St Paul's life and service



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for Israel. May we not once again contemplate **A Review.** amidst this thought of patriotism the great necessity for missions to Israel? If the Apostle felt so keenly the burden of sending the Gospel to the Jews, we too ought to have in mind the great principle that actuated him: "to the Jew first." Even as Apostle to the Gentiles St Paul was ever anxious to move the Jews to emulation in order if possible to lead them to Christ.

IX. *His Certitude.*—We cannot fail to notice at **His** every point of the Apostle's discussion the quiet, **Certitude.** calm assurance of his presentation of the truth. He writes as a man who knows and is sure of his ground. There is no hitch, no hesitation, no difficulty, but, throughout, a perfect realisation that the truth possesses him and that he possesses the truth. In particular the treatment in the closing section of his great doctrinal passage (ch. viii. 31-39) shows the buoyant confidence and absolute assurance of the Apostle's attitude to Christ. He knows Whom he believes, and he is perfectly certain of his ground as he contemplates past, present, and future, and bursts forth into rapturous adoration, "If God be for us who can be against us?" It makes all the difference to Christian life if it can go far beyond "I believe," or "I hope," and can look up to God in quiet faith and full assurance with, "I know."

As we contemplate these and other similar elements of the Apostle's life we cannot imagine anything finer than the type of Christian character here portrayed. And if we seek to know the cause of it all we are compelled to attribute it to

## The Epistle to the Romans

**A Review.** the Apostle's relation to Christ and His Gospel. Doubtless Saul of Tarsus was a man of fine temperament, great ability, and strong character in his unregenerate life. But it was the coming into contact with Christ that transformed him into what he was and gave him his Christlikeness of character and conduct. If we were permitted to ask him the secret of it all he would reply, and that with evident truth and ringing conviction, "By the grace of God I am what I am."

## XXII

### A REVIEW

#### II. THE APOSTLE'S LETTER

THE importance of the Epistle to the Romans has long been recognised, and it is rightly regarded as in some respects the greatest of all the Apostle's writings. Among its elements of interest and value the following may be regarded as particularly noteworthy :—

**A Review.**  
The  
Apostle's  
Letter.

I. *Doctrinal Value*.—More than any other Epistle, this gives a systematic treatment of some of the leading doctrines of the Apostolic message. While other Epistles, like Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, and even Corinthians, have their doctrinal elements of supreme value, there is a system and a fulness in the treatment of Romans that marks it out from all the rest of St Paul's works. No one can read its great sections on Justification, Sanctification, Consecration, to say nothing of its profound treatment of the Jewish problem, without becoming conversant with some of the leading doctrines of the Christian religion.

**Doctrinal  
Value.**

II. *Practical Value*.—Doctrine is always intended to be expressed in duty. Christian teaching is

**Practical  
Value.**

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**A Review.** never merely speculative, but always intensely practical, and all that the Apostle has to say on such questions as Sin, Redemption, and Holiness, are related immediately and constantly to the life of the individual believer and of the Christian community. At every point his teaching is definitely personal and is intended for full and constant reproduction in character and conduct. Whether he speaks of the results of sin in Jew and Gentile, or of justification by faith, or of union with Christ in His death and resurrection, or of the gift of the Holy Spirit to the believer, or of Jewish rebellion, or of Gentile acceptance, or of the relation of the believer to the Christian community and the State, the doctrine inculcated is intended to be expressed in life. The ideal is to become realised, and following His Master St Paul's supreme thought is this : "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

**Historical  
Value.**

III. *Historical Value.*—More than any other Epistle, Romans is concerned with the relation of the two periods of God's dealings with mankind, the Jewish and the Christian dispensations. The Apostle, as we have seen, shows that between the two there is at once an underlying harmony and an essential difference, and it is the discussion of these points that affords so much that is practically valuable to the student of history. In the same way the discussion turns on the religious differences between Jews and Gentiles, and thus provides another aspect of the historical problem. St Paul was a great historical scholar, and yet underlying

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all his treatment of history is the religious idea **A Review.** and purpose. He would be the first to say what appears on almost every page of his discussion of history :—

“There’s a Divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough hew them how we will.”

IV. *Dispensational Value.*—History looks back-  
ward, but this Epistle looks forward as well, **Dispensa-  
tional  
Value.** and it is in connection with a great future that part of its importance is seen. We have noticed something of this in our study of the great Jewish section. Romans should be constantly read in the light of the promise to Abraham (Gen. xii.). Israel failed to understand the full bearing of the Divine promise: “In thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” The opponents of the Apostle thought this meant that the Jews were to be blessed above and beyond all other nations, and while this was true in itself it was not the whole truth. God had chosen Israel not for itself, but for the sake of others, and the Apostle’s discussion (ch. xi.) is to the effect that in the future the Jews are to be the means of blessing to the whole world in the fulfilment of God’s purposes. It is this dispensational aspect, as it is rightly called, that makes this writing so important. And when, as we have seen, we view the Epistle in this light, it becomes luminous with new ideas and suggestions. Bishop Lightfoot and Dr Hort were not far wrong when they regarded the great

## The Epistle to the Romans

**A Review.** section about Israel (ch. ix.-xi.) as in some respects the very heart and core of the Epistle. And when we look at what the Apostle wrote in the light of this great truth we see that from the opening almost to the closing words the two dispensations, Jewish and Gentile, are in sight throughout. We must never allow the present possessions and privileges of the Church of God to shut our eyes to the Old Testament promises to the Jews. All the blessing that has come to the Church in the past and present is due to the Jews, from whom Christ came after the flesh, and it will be no different in the future; for all the blessing that is to come to the world when the Church of God has been taken away is to be through a Jewish channel. Well may the Apostle, as he contemplates all these glories of the future, burst forth into his doxology to "the depth of the wealth and of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God."

Philoso-  
phical  
Value.

V. *Philosophical Value.*—The Apostle was a profound teacher as well as a practical evangelist, and in the course of his discussion he enables us to see some of the higher and more philosophical aspects and implications of the Gospel. He introduces us to his philosophy of religion, as Sir William Ramsay rightly calls it (ch. i.), showing us that there was a primitive revelation, followed by human degradation, and that moral corruption invariably follows religious debasement. He also gives us a philosophy of nature (ch. viii.) in his wonderful revelation that in some way or other



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nature and man are so connected that the ultimate **A Review.** victory over sin will issue in a new creation and a marvellous transformation of nature. So also we have the Apostle's philosophy of history, as he states and discusses the precise places of Jew and Gentile in the great unifying process of the future. The sweep of the Apostle's thought as he realises first the place of Jew and Gentile, and then the unity of both that is to be consummated, is one of the most remarkable features of this remarkable Epistle. Not least of all is what may be called the Apostle's philosophy of law, as he states (ch. xiii.) the relation of the Christian to the country in which he happens to dwell. Submission to authority, and love to our fellow-men, is the simple yet sufficient principle that should dominate the Christian life. And thus quite apart from the purely theological and dogmatic elements of this Epistle we see its underlying philosophy as expressed by the great thinker.

VI. *Psychological Value.*—Students of human **Psycho-logical Value.** nature always find in this Epistle a wealth of information. The profound thought of the unity of the race (ch. v.) will be a starting point for much careful study. The way in which the results of sin in human action are depicted is another important topic (ch. i.). The possibilities of intellectual pride and moral self-deception amidst definite evil constitutes yet another aspect of thought (ch. ii.). The bondage of the will, and indeed the entire nature, to the power of evil

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**A Review.** is, however, the greatest problem in this connection. The more the great passages (ch. vi., vii.) are studied, the more clearly it will be seen that only in the results of sin on every part of our inner being can some of the deepest problems of life be met and explained. The conflict between good and evil, the defeat of good by evil, and the powerlessness of human nature to recommend itself to God and make itself holy, are among the great principles of life which led the Apostle to emphasise the need of that Gospel in which alone victory can be found.

**Spiritual  
Value.**

VII. *Spiritual Value.*—The same writing that shows the powerlessness of our nature through the indwelling of sin reveals the Gospel as “the power of God,” a power that is bestowed upon us by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. After the one simple hint given to us in chapter v. about the Spirit of God, we are introduced to a chapter which may be called the *locus classicus* of the New Testament in regard to the work of the Holy Spirit on the soul. No other section has anything like the fulness, variety, and depth of teaching on this subject, and the more earnestly we ponder, and the more definitely we appropriate the fact of the Spirit's work, the more effective will our life and service be.

**Prophetical  
Value.**

VIII. *Prophetical Value.*—There is one section (ch. xi.) where the Apostle leaves altogether the historical attitude, and occupies himself with that which is purely predictive. As already pointed out, there was nothing whatever in the circumstances of

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his time that should have prompted him to deal **A Review.** with this subject. Indeed, everything, humanly speaking, was against the thought of any glorious future for Jew and Gentile in which they would be united in Christ, but the Apostle does not hesitate to predict a wonderful time, and the result is that ch. xi. stands, and will stand, as one of the essentially prophetic parts of the New Testament. It is easy to think lightly of the old definition of prophecy as "history written beforehand," but it is impossible to ignore the predictive element as expressed in this chapter of the Epistle.

IX. *Evidential Value.*—It is impossible to over- **Evidential Value.** look the real importance of Romans as an evidence of Christianity. St Paul possessed the three essential requirements of a true witness: disinterestedness, sincerity, and ability. He had no personal interests to serve by becoming a Christian; on the contrary; humanly speaking, it was a change fatal to all his natural hopes. The honesty of the Apostle is equally evident, for no one has ever dreamed of charging him with any form of insincerity. As to his ability, it is patent on the face of everything he said and did, and all this makes his testimony to Christ and Christianity of the highest possible value.

"No man ever forged this Epistle. It carries its own credentials on the face of it, and shows the broad seal of heaven stamped upon it, as clearly as the heavens and the earth declare that creation is the work of God, and not of an impostor" (Haldane, *Romans*, p. 708).

## The Epistle to the Romans

**A Review.** In the face of these considerations we are justified in calling constant and close attention to the witness borne by St Paul to the Christianity of his time.

## XXIII

# A REVIEW

### III. THE APOSTLE'S GOSPEL

IT is obvious that in the light of the Apostle's **A Review**. characteristic phrase twice used, "My Gospel (ch. <sup>The</sup> ii. 16; xvi. 25), there must have been something <sup>Apostle's</sup> distinctive about the message delivered by him. It <sup>Gospel.</sup> seems essential, therefore, to look a little closely at his presentation of Christianity.

I. *Its Source*.—Why did the Apostle speak of **Its Source**. the Gospel as his own? The inquiry is important. Does it mean that the way of salvation is, in Godet's words, "a creation of his powerful understanding, or a revelation of God's mind. . . . In the latter case we have a witness speaking; in the former a genius speculating. . . . In the first place the Epistle of Paul deserves our admiration; in the second our faith; it is clear that the difference is great and that the question cannot be declared idle" (*Romans*, vol. ii., pp. 431, 432). Now there can be no question that if we accept the Apostle's own testimony, his Gospel was a revelation from God. This keynote is struck in the opening words, and finds an echo at the close, while in other Epistles the same ringing testimony is given. "I certify

## The Epistle to the Romans

**A Review.** you, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. i. 11, 12). The reason, therefore, why the Apostle speaks of "my Gospel" is that he had himself received the message direct from God, had appropriated it to himself for his own needs, and for years had preached it out of the fulness of his conviction and adhesion. It was the specific message intended for the whole world which could rightly be described by the Apostle of the Gentiles as his own Gospel. It is this that he means when he speaks of "the Gospel of the glory of the blessed God which was committed to my trust" (1 Tim. i. 11), and "Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David, according to my Gospel" (2 Tim. ii. 8). It was the same consciousness of a Divine revelation received into his heart and reproduced in his testimony that makes him speak to the Corinthians of "the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved. . . . For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received" (1 Cor. xv. 1-3). This Divine source of the Pauline Gospel gives it its supreme authority, its distinctive character, and its unerring force.

**Its Nature.** II. *Its Nature.*—But what was the substance of this Gospel in which the Apostle gloried? As we recall the various sections of this great Epistle we are enabled to see the truths that filled the Apostle's heart and overflowed through his lips and life.



## A Review

(a) It is the Gospel of Human Condemnation. **A Review.**  
 But is not this an incongruity? Can the thought — **A Gospel of Human Condemnation.**  
 of condemnation be associated with “Good News”?  
 It can, if we carefully remember that it is the first, and only the first, stage of a Divine message. It is the Gospel to the unsaved, the message of conviction, the declaration that man has sinned, and that judged by the standard of the Divine law he is guilty before God. It is the message that sin means lawlessness, and that in the sight of God there is no essential difference in the fact of human sinfulness. It means that God’s revelations in nature, and even in the Old Testament, are not sufficient, that no natural theology can show how to put away sin, and that only as men measure themselves by the perfect law of God can they come to realise the true state of their souls through sin. It is recorded of a man under conviction of sin that on going to a clergyman with the burden of his trouble, the latter burst forth with an exclamation of praise to God. “What!” said the other, “do you praise God that I am a sinner?” “No,” was the reply, “I praise God that you know that you are a sinner.”

(b) It is the Gospel of Complete Justification. — **of Complete Justification.**  
 When the sinner becomes conscious of sin and condemnation the message of the Apostle assures him of the way of righteousness by faith in Christ. Justification means acceptance with God, the gift of Christ as our righteousness, to be received by simple trust. No such Gospel as this ever came from man, for there is that in human nature which

## The Epistle to the Romans

**A Review.** is utterly opposed to righteousness as a gift. Man always seeks to *attain*, while the Gospel urges men to *obtain* this righteousness by faith in Christ, for justification is "the glorious Gospel" which he preached far and wide. More perhaps than anything else this can be called his own Gospel.

—of  
Continuous  
Sanctifica-  
tion.

(c) It is the Gospel of Continuous Sanctification. The soul that has been accepted must become acceptable. The removal of sins through justification does not carry with it the removal of sin as an inward principle. For this the Gospel of Sanctification is essential, which means holiness of heart and life, and victory over indwelling sin. In the three central chapters (vi.-viii.) the Apostle proclaims this aspect of his message, assuring the soul not only that the past has been forgiven and the sinner reinstated in his true position with God, not only that the future hereafter is all assured by virtue of the same Divine righteousness, but that the present time, be it long or short, between the past and the future, is met, and more than met by the presence of the Holy Spirit in the heart, Whose indwelling power gives complete and continuous victory, counteracting the evil principle and enabling the soul to walk in newness of life and to serve in newness of spirit.

—of Divine  
Vindication.

(d) It is the Gospel of Divine Vindication. Face to face with the great and pressing Jewish problem the Apostle sets himself to "justify the ways of God to man." With unquestioned force and absolute fearlessness he drives home the two great truths: that God is righteous, and man is

## A Review

responsible. Not for an instant will he allow even **A Review.** the possibility of various objections raised against God ; on the contrary, he carries the war into the enemy's country, and shows that so far from God being responsible for the state of the Jewish nation, it was due wholly and solely to their unwillingness to submit themselves to the righteousness of God. Then he goes on to depict in glowing terms that wonderful future when in the presence of Jewish and Gentile blessing God will be vindicated before the whole universe when He has mercy upon all.

(e) It is the Gospel of Practical Consecration. —of  
The Apostle was charged more than once with Practical  
teaching in such a way as to give licence to sin, Consecra-  
tion.  
but the taunt is absolutely unwarranted, as we see from various parts of this Epistle. In particular, the closing chapters show that "the mercies of God," as revealed in the Gospel, are the only and adequate motive power for personal devotedness of life. Whether in the Church or in the State, whether in individual or corporate life, whether among the vigorous or the halting in Christian experience, the life of the believer is to be wholly dedicated to his Master's service and glory. Every thing, everywhere, and at all times, a life is to be lived which will reveal the beauty of holiness and the bounty of Divine love. The Apostle of righteousness by faith is the Apostle of reality by works, and the sanctification of the soul within is to express itself in the service of the life without. In matters of personal duty, Church requirements, State

## The Epistle to the Romans

**A Review.** obligations, and conscientious scruples, the one principle that is to dominate everything is "the good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God."

**Its  
Character-  
istics.**

III. *Its Characteristics.*—As we pass from the source and nature of the Apostolic Gospel we cannot help observing the features which marked his presentation of it.

**A Gospel  
—Free.**

(a) It was a Free Gospel. There were no conditions laid down, except the obvious and essential requirement of faith. This was man's simple, necessary, and adequate answer to the revelation of God. Faith received the gift from God, faith responded to the claim of God, faith rested on the promise of God, and in these three things the Apostle and his hearers found one of the glories of the Gospel of Christ.

**—Full.**

(b) It was a Full Gospel. It covered all the needs of the soul, past, present, and future. Whether there was a sense of guilt, or a consciousness of condemnation, or a realisation of separation, or an experience of bondage, or a feeling of powerlessness, or a loathing of defilement, the Gospel was ready with its complete provision. Towering above man's highest needs, rising high over man's sins, meeting man's greatest deserts, and soaring aloft over man's highest thoughts, the fulness of the Pauline Gospel was an inspiration to the preacher and a consolation to the recipient.

**—Universal.**

(c) It was a Universal Gospel. Wherever the Apostle went he preached it everywhere, and at all times. To Jew and Gentile, Greek and Barbarian, bond and free. wise and foolish, the Gospel was

## A Review

equally necessary, equally available, and equally **A Review.** adequate. Again and again the Apostle rejoiced to proclaim that "the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him."

(*d*) It was an Eternal Gospel. It lasted because —Eternal. it was permanent. It swept the whole horizon of human life. Looking back over the past, looking round upon the present, and looking on to the future, it proclaimed and provided the Lord our Righteousness."

And we must never forget that, as Godet well says, the experience of ages has set its seal to the conviction that the Apostle's Gospel was not his own, but God's.

## XXIV

### A REVIEW

#### IV. THE APOSTLE'S MASTER

**A Review.** IT is sometimes said that the Epistle to the Romans is not one of St Paul's Christological Epistles. This is doubtless true in certain respects, especially when it is compared with Ephesians, and even Philippians. But there is more than enough in it to show what the Apostle believed and taught concerning the Person and Work of his Master. The Gospel which we have been considering had Christ for its theme and substance. Every blessing, every grace, every power, every privilege, every duty, was associated and inextricably bound up with the Pauline conception of Jesus Christ. What then may we learn concerning the Christ of the Epistle to the Romans?

His Human  
Life.

I. *His Human Life.*—Very simply, and yet with perfect clearness the human nature and earthly life of Jesus Christ are stated and implied. He is "of the seed of David according to the flesh" (ch. i. 3). He was sent by God "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (ch. viii. 3). And He came from Jewish stock "concerning the flesh" (ch. ix. 5). Nothing could be more unequivocal



## A Review

than these references to the real humanity of A Review. Jesus Christ.

II. *His Divine Position*.—In the same way the Apostle bears abundant testimony to the Divine nature of Christ. Five times He is spoken of as “Son of God,” and twice as “God’s own Son.” All through the Epistle He is depicted as the Source of salvation and the Object of faith in such a way as to prove beyond all question that these redemptive acts would have been impossible in anyone who is not “God, blessed for ever” (ch. ix. 5). His Divine Position.

III. *His Scriptural Relationships*.—At the outset the Apostle strikes the keynote of the Epistle, by speaking of the Gospel concerning His Son as “promised afore through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures” (ch. i. 2), and it is not long before he elaborates this by showing that the righteousness of God provided in Christ is “witnessed by the law and the prophets” (ch. iii. 21). From the earliest words to the very last sentence the Old Testament bulks largely in the Apostle’s thought and teaching. Everything concerning Christ is justified and vindicated from the Divine oracles, and thus both Jew and Gentile are given the Divine warrant and absolute assurance for all that the writer has to say. This connection of Jesus Christ with the Scriptures of the Old Covenant is one of the most striking features of Pauline thought in this Epistle, and calls for prolonged study as a testimony both to Christ and to the Old Testament. His Scriptural Relationships.

# The Epistle to the Romans

**A Review.**    *IV. His Redemptive Work.*—This Epistle is pre-eminently concerned with the message of the Cross. The death of Jesus Christ is shown to be a propitiation for the sin of man, and also a vindication of the righteousness of God (ch. iii. 25, 26). God gave His Son to die for the sin of the world, and thereby He commended His love toward us (ch. v. 8). The scarlet thread of atoning sacrifice runs through all the Apostle's teaching, and whether it be for the righteousness of justification, or of sanctification, or of glorification, or of consecration, the sacrificial death of Christ is the Source and Spring of everything. We are justified by His blood; we are united with Him in His death for holiness; we are saved from wrath through Him; and we are so to live as not to hurt the conscience of anyone for whom Christ died. At all times, under all circumstances, the Apostle glories in the Cross.

**His Glorious  
Resurrec-  
tion.**

*V. His Glorious Resurrection.*—This is the other side of the Apostolic message. The Christ Who died is the Christ Who lives, and as we are reconciled by His death, so we are kept safe in His life. His death was our redemption, and His resurrection our vindication. It provides newness of life, guarantees fulness of power, and assures us of immortality hereafter. The resurrection is the only explanation of Pauline Christianity.

**His Racial  
Headship.**

*VI. His Racial Headship.*—In the great passage which deals with the two Adams the Apostle teaches that as we are united with the first Adam through sin, we are also one with the second Adam through grace and righteousness. Whatever we

## A Review

have lost in the one we have more than regained **A Review.** in the Other, for if trespasses abound through Adam, grace super-abounds in Christ. It is this racial unity that gives point to the Apostolic phrase, "in Christ," for it is in our union with Jesus Christ in death and life that we realise in personal, practical experience the preciousness of His death and the power of His resurrection. "In Christ" has been called "the monogram of St Paul," and this is certainly true, for it is the seat and centre of his thought concerning Jesus Christ.

VII. *His Divine Lordship.*—St Paul's favourite **His Divine** title for his Master is "Jesus Christ our Lord," **Lordship.** and this keynote is struck in the opening words (ch. i. 3), and carried on in almost every important section until the very close of his great writing. Every part of his doctrinal teaching is associated with the Lordship of Christ. "Being justified by faith, we have peace through our Lord Jesus Christ" (ch. v. 1). We rejoice in God "through our Lord Jesus Christ" (ch. v. 11). Grace reigns unto eternal life "through Jesus Christ our Lord" (ch. v. 21). "The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (ch. vi. 23). He thanks God for deliverance "through Jesus Christ our Lord" (ch. vii. 25). And nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is "in Christ Jesus our Lord" (ch. viii. 39). Not only so, but we are to confess "Jesus as Lord" (ch. x. 9), and never to forget that living or dying "we are the Lord's" (ch. xiv. 8). Indeed, it was for this very purpose that Christ died and rose from the

## The Epistle to the Romans

**A Review.** dead, "that He might be Lord" (ch. xiv. 9). And every matter of conscience, every scruple, every difficulty is so to be faced that we may with one mind glorify the God and Father of "our Lord Jesus Christ" (ch. xv. 6). Nothing could be clearer or more unquestioned than this constant emphasis on the Lordship of Christ and the absolute necessity of our loyalty to Him.

As we review these aspects of the Person and Work of Jesus Christ and recall the fact that all this was taught and circulated within thirty years of the crucifixion of Christ on the Cross, we can understand at least a little of what the early Church thought of Christ, and of how He was regarded by Christians. The earliest message concerning Him was as high as our message to-day. Christ was never an example of Faith, but always its Object, and in these various aspects of what He was and did we have the essential substance and satisfying content of the Pauline Gospel.

**Conclusion.** And so we close our study of this marvellous Epistle. We have but touched the merest fringe of it; the study is for a life-time. As Luther said: "All wherein true Christianity consisteth . . . is to be found here in such perfection that it is impossible to wish anything more or better. So rich a treasure is it of spiritual wealth that even to him who has read a thousand times something new will ever be presenting itself." Practically the whole of Christianity is found here, and however

## A Review

much we may know of it already, there will still **A Review.** be always something fresh to discover in order to guide, cheer, and bless the longing, lowly, and loving soul. It will repay all the attention we can give it; the mind will be instructed, the heart uplifted, the imagination inspired, and the will directed. And those who come to it with an earnest desire to learn its truths will enter into its meaning, and will also experience that fulness of grace, rest, joy, and peace which it is absolutely certain to produce in the hearts and lives of all those who wish to know and possess of a truth the Pauline Gospel of the righteousness and grace of Jesus Christ our Lord.





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